A YOUNG SAVAGE

ARBARA YECHTON

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A YOUNG SAVAGE

BY

BARBARA YECHTON

Author of "We Ten, or The Story of the Roses;" "A Lovable Crank, or More Leaves from the Roses;" "Derick;" "A Little Turning Aside," etc.

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TO MY COUSIN

SADIE PRICE BRETT

AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

OF

BARBARA YECHTON

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A YOUNG SAVAGE

CHAPTER I

THE ARRIVAL OF LITTLE JOHN

THE day was bright and sunny, and the little mother loved sunshine, so Sharley pulled up the window shade. The flood of golden light that streamed in showed a cosy room, the shabbiness of which was partially concealed by many an ingenious device. Then the girl returned to her place and dropped into a chair, facing aunt Angela with apparent calmness, though her heart was beating considerably faster than usual.

"Who is she? And how did you *ever* come to undertake such a charge?" There was more than a touch of sharpness in Miss Angela Latimer's voice as she asked the questions.

Mrs. Latimer was a little afraid of her brisk, decided sister-in-law. Raising herself to a sitting position on the lounge, she looked up deprecatingly, the color deepening in her delicate face. "Well, you know there has n't been much of an income since" — her voice grew plaintive, and her hand went in search of her handkerchief — "since my dear husband was taken away. And it

is very hard — very hard — to live — even barely decently — and make both ends meet. We won't run into debt — and it 's *so* hard to keep out of it. You don't know anything about poverty, Gela"— breaking off with a little tragic gesture, and burying her face in the handkerchief.

Sharley got to her mother's side, shook up her pillows energetically, and laid her back on them in a trice. "There, there, mother dear," she said soothingly. "Don't fret yourself — I 'll tell aunt Angela all about it."

Dropping into her chair again, she went on rapidly, and a little defiantly: "It 's just as mother said, and as you know, aunt Gela: what father left us is n't enough to keep mother and us seven children in any kind of comfort — and mother has got to have comforts. She is too delicate to rough it, and go without things as we do." A faint sigh from the direction of the sofa gave emphasis to this last remark. "And it 's a continued, awful struggle to keep out of debt and make a decent appearance. People don't dream how we have to pinch and skimp! And I am sick and tired of it!" The color flew over Sharley's face, to the very roots of her smooth brown hair, and she threw out her hands impulsively. "I know French and music — I suppose I could go out and teach — go out and make some money that way," she said; "but how could I leave mother and the children to Audrey? she is *so* forgetful! And anyway," as Miss Latimer made a hasty motion of disapproval, "you would n't

want me to go out to work for a living — none of our rich relations would like that."

"That is not at all necessary," asserted Miss Latimer, sitting up very straight. "A little more care and economy at home" —

"Economy!" tearfully interrupted Mrs. Latimer.

"Economy!" echoed Sharley indignantly. "If you only *knew* how we turn and twist and make over everything we wear! Audrey and I have n't had a new gown for ages; this is the third winter for Rach's hat; Jamie's shoes are a disgrace to decent people; and as for Dorrie!" — A choke in her voice made her stop abruptly.

"I 'm sure I 'm very sorry, but I allow your mother all that I can afford" — began Miss Latimer coldly, but Sharley broke in quickly.

"We are not asking you for any more, aunt Angela," she said, "only mentioning these things that you may understand why we are taking this girl into our family. Teddy is working like a beaver, and by and by, perhaps, his position will be a good one, but just now he gets a very small salary, — too small to be of much help, — though the dear fellow gives us nearly every penny of it. So when Mrs. Brydges wrote from Anaconda to ask mother if she would take charge of this girl for a year, or longer, and said that Mr. Kyle would pay liberally for it, we were only too delighted to answer that we would. As Teddy says," with a short, dry laugh, "we will welcome her as a friend and brother — sister — anything — for the relief her money 'll be to us."

"And — to repeat my first question — who is she?" asked Miss Latimer. She was a large, fine-looking woman, with no sense of humor whatever, and with a voice that matched her size. "I should also like to know where on the continent that extraordinarily named town is situated."

"Anaconda? Yes, is n't it a queer name? It 's away out west — Montana, I think. I never heard of it until the Brydges went there to live. There 's an enormous hotel out there" (Sharley was so relieved her news was told that she grew quite communicative), "crowded with the oddest mixture of people, — broken-down gentlemen and graduates of colleges, who work on the ranches almost like common laborers, and in the mines for a living; men worth millions — silver kings and railroad owners, who can scarcely write their own names; their wives — just about as wise — wearing diamonds and Paris gowns to breakfast; and their children growing up like so many Hottentots or Zulus — just running wild! That is what Mrs. Brydges writes. Of course, I don't know, I 've never been there. This Mr. Kyle — John Kyle — owns a silver mine or a big ranch or something that makes him very rich; and this girl that 's coming to us is his only child — Juanita Kyle."

"Juanita? — What a name!" exclaimed Miss Latimer.

"Why I think it 's rather pretty," remarked Mrs. Latimer from the lounge. "You know the J is pronounced like an h. It is so uncommon, and," pensively, "James used to be fond of

whistling it — I mean the song of that name — when he was calling on me long ago." She sighed.

Now that the ice was broken, Sharley deemed it best to give all particulars. "This Huanita or Juanita, or whatever she calls herself," she said, taking up her story again, "is about Audrey's age — she 's between sixteen and seventeen. And from what we hear I fancy we 'll earn every cent of the money her father will pay us. Hear what Mrs. Brydges writes." She lifted an open letter from Mrs. Latimer's table and read aloud: "'Mr. Kyle is very much pleased with the new arrangement, and, I can see, is hoping for great results from the training and influence which his daughter will get while with you. He is an honest, kind-hearted Irishman, utterly unpolished, who began life out here by working as a day laborer in the mine which he now owns. My husband says he has a good deal of what men call "horse sense" — whatever that may mean. He married a Spanish girl, who, if the child's face counts for anything, must have come of gentle blood. She died some ten or eleven years ago, and since then Miss Juanita has had everything her own sweet way. Mr. Kyle's great ambition is to have his daughter become what he terms "a furs'-class lady." You may be able to work wonders, but, to be perfectly frank, I don't envy you and Sharley your task. While her father has made long business trips away from home, your future charge has lived at this hotel or on a large "stock" ranch with only

an old Irish nurse to look after her, and the consensus of opinion, even in this extremely unconventional community, seems to be that the young lady is what your Teddy would term "a pretty big handful." She is spoiled to the last degree, and as for manners — she absolutely has none at all. She is a young savage! I hope you will not become discouraged over this account; but I thought you should know what you were undertaking.'"

"Good gracious! And you are going to take such a girl into your home!" exclaimed Miss Latimer incredulously. "You, Harriet, with your ill health — and expose your family to such an influence? You 'll regret it!"

"No, we won't, aunt Angela," declared Sharley stoutly, before her mother could reply. It was easy to see that capable, energetic Sharley was the actual head of the family; though Mrs. Latimer would have been very much surprised to hear it. "We won't regret having enough money to provide a competent governess for Audrey and Rach, and the two little ones. The girls are to study with Miss Kyle — I must practice that Juanita, or I 'll never be able to say it properly. We won't regret being able to make mother more comfortable, nor will we regret paying our debts without first worrying ourselves almost sick over them; nor having some new clothes. Indeed, we will not! Teddy said last night that if she wore war paint and a feather head-dress, and incidentally flourished a tomahawk, he would still extend

the right hand of friendship to her. And I shall certainly do likewise."

"I do wish you would not always be quoting your brother's frivolous remarks," Miss Latimer said irritably.

But with an exclamation of surprise Sharley had rushed to the window. "Goodness me! there 's a carriage at the door — I do believe she has come!" she declared, starting to leave the room.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Latimer nervously, sitting up, and patting her soft, pretty brown hair. "Am I all right to see strangers? Sharley, hand me that little white shawl before you go — it will cover up some of the shabbiness of this old gown."

Miss Latimer threw her fur collar around her neck, and half rose, as if to go, then, to her niece's regret, changed her mind and settled back in her chair.

Before Sharley could reach the door it flew open, with a violence that made Mrs. Latimer wince, and two young people almost fell into the room. One was a tall, fair girl of sixteen, with a heavy braid of brown hair hanging down her back; this was Audrey. The boy, whose merry face appeared over her shoulder, his cap on the back of his head, an expansive smile on his lips, was her younger brother Kittredge, commonly known in the family as Kit, or, occasionally, to his disgust, as Kitty. Both looked highly excited, and delivered their news without preamble.

"She 's come! That girl 's *come!*" announced

Audrey, her dreamy blue eyes wide open and alert. "She 's coming up the front steps now. There 's a big, fat" —

— "Irishwoman with her," broke in Kit, eager for an audience, "and a 'p-u-r-p'— a bandy-legged, hercules-chested black and white bull terrier, with the most beautiful triangular ears! Looks as if somebody 'd given him a bat on one side the head and knocked him into a Dick Dead-eye. And such a swagger — Whe-ew!" throwing a hasty glance over his shoulder, "if she is n't here right now!" Covered with embarrassment, he made a sudden dive under his sister's arm and into the room, swinging his big strap of school-books roughly against his aunt's chair, and almost upsetting Sharley as he sped wildly over to the window. Here, established behind the heavy curtains, he quieted down and awaited developments.

"Kit Latimer! Don't you know better than to make such a noise in mother's room?" began the elder sister sharply; then an exclamation from her mother made her wheel quickly round, to find a newcomer close to her elbow. The "young savage" had arrived.

"Well, thank goodness! whatever she may be, she does n't *look* common!" was Sharley's first thought, with relief; the next, — "Why, she 's just like a picture!"

And so she was — like one of Velasquez's pictures, with her aristocratic little nose, small, grave, red-lipped mouth, pointed chin, and soft, sombre,

heavily lashed black eyes. Very soon they learned that those eyes could sparkle and flash! She was as tall as Audrey, slender, and erect as a lance, and with the face of a child of thirteen; her hair, worn in a straight fringe across her forehead and cut short, curling under and around and over her ears, added to this youthful appearance. Her hair was very dark, soft, and fine, and possessed of a silky sheen which was beautiful, though regarded as a great trial by its owner. The tailor-made cloth frock, reaching to the tops of her boots, with its well-fitting coat, would have been eminently satisfactory to the critical eyes of Mrs. and Miss Latimer but for its color — it was a brilliant red. And the hat, also red, they instantly decided was entirely too large and heavily weighted with feathers for a girl of her age. Nor did they approve of the number of massive gold and silver bangles which clinked noisily against one another every time she moved her hands. In a leash she held the dog that Kit had described in such graphic terms — a large-sized, thoroughbred bull terrier.

Sitting down directly in front of his young mistress, the terrier cocked his slender, alert-looking ears, and gazed about him with an air of such kindly, well-meant, if important, interest that, as Kit remarked afterward, "no one could possibly have taken offense at it."

Behind the girl and the dog stood a woman whose Hibernian nationality was written in every line of her round, rosy, good-natured face. She

wore a rather long, handsome sealskin coat, which fastened snugly across her capacious chest, and gaped wide open below the waist line. Coarse blue woolen gloves covered her large hands; her hair hung in a heavy rough knob, barely held together by one or two large hairpins, worn white by long service, and on her crown, fallen rakishly to one side, was perched an airy French bonnet, several sizes too small for the wearer's head. The effect was so funny as to send Kit into a spasm of laughter behind the curtains. But quite unconscious of this, the object of his scrutiny stood with her thick woolen-gloved fingers slightly interlaced before her, — rotundity of figure would allow of no more, — a pleasant light in her small, half-closed eyes, and a complacent smile on her lips.

There was an instant's awkward pause after Ann had ushered in the unexpected visitors, then Sharley put out her hand with a friendly smile. "You are Juanita Kyle," she said cordially, "and I am Sharley Latimer. We are very glad to see you. This is my mother" —

But the newcomer hastily interrupted her. A sparkle had come into the soft eyes; the serious lips curved mutinously. "I 'm *not* going to be called by that horrid Spanish name any longer," she informed her audience, in a clear, positive voice.

"Now, now, Miss Wannie darlint!" remonstrated the stout person in the French hat.

"You just shut up!" politely retorted the "darlint," with an impatient wave of her hand.

Audrey giggled nervously; Kit stuck his head between the curtains and whistled softly, "That's where the laugh comes in;" and putting up her lorgnette, with a snort of disapproval, Miss Latimer gazed steadily at the stranger.

But not a whit cared that young person. "I am named for my father, Mr. John Kyle, of Anaconda," she went on to say, with great pride in her tone, and a comprehensive glance at the assembled company. "Juanita simply means little John — and that is what I want to be called — John Kyle. I'm just sick of 'Juanita'!" She pulled down the corners of her mouth over it. "And you might as well know — first as last — that I don't intend to answer to any such name." Then in a slightly friendlier tone, "This is my dog, Gag — Agagio Kyle," waving her hand toward the terrier; the introduction was acknowledged by a short bark of suppressed excitement, and a heavy thumping of a tail on the floor. "And this," another wave of her hand, this time in the direction of the stout person in the sealskin coat, who curtsied, smiling broadly, "is Katy Karney. She's known me ever since I was born — she takes care of my clothes and things — and she's to be here with me. Dad forgot to tell Mrs. Brydges to tell you 'bout Katy — but I guess that does n't matter," carelessly. "I've got to have her, anyhow — and daddy'll pay for her. Who's that girl?" with a rapid change of subject, pointing to Audrey. "And what is the matter with that boy? Is he playing a magician's trick? Has n't he any

body?" turning her sharp eyes on Kit's head, which still protruded from between the curtains, though at her words he suddenly dropped from view.

By this time Sharley had recovered from her first astonishment, and she proceeded to introduce Miss Kyle to the different members of the family that were present — though Kit refused to emerge from his concealment, and Miss Latimer's cool stare, her frigid bow might have been disconcerting to any one but the newcomer, on whom they were wasted.

— "And here," finished Sharley, drawing Juanita toward the lounge, "is our mother — the dearest, sweetest, best little mother in all the wide world!"

She certainly was a pretty little mother, blushing rosily over Sharley's compliment, and bending forward to meet the new member of her family with outstretched hand and a most winning smile. "You may be Little John to the rest of the household, but you must let me call you Juanita. I think it is such a pretty name — I have an especial liking for it," she said, with a graceful tact which her eldest daughter admired but could never imitate. "We are sincerely glad to have you here" ("How glad you 'll never know!" thought Sharley); "and I hope you will be happy with us. We shall certainly try to make you so. On account of my ill health," she sighed, "I am not always able to be with the family; but my boys and girls come to me here, and tell me all their

joys and trials" (here Miss Latimer smiled and gave her eldest niece a glance which not for worlds would loyal Sharley have returned); "and I want you to do the same," continued the unconscious Mrs. Latimer; "I want you to come in here to see me very often. You will always find a welcome." She drew the tall, half-reluctant girl down to her level and kissed her.

Immediately Agagio Kyle stood upon his hind-legs, his fore-paws on the lounge, his tail swinging furiously from side to side, and bestowed a liberal and unexpected caress, which included the whole of Mrs. Latimer's cheek and ear. Friendliness was in his eyes and mien, but the object of his attentions was nervous and afraid of dogs, so she shrank away, crying out in alarm. Miss Latimer echoed this cry and made a movement to stand upon her chair. "The animal may be mad!" she suggested loudly; which sent Sharley and Audrey flying to their mother's side, brought a shout of laughter from Kittredge, and called a note of contempt into Juanita's voice as she sharply bade her dog, "Down sir! Down this minute, Gag!" emphasizing the command with a stamp of her foot. But unmindful of his mistress's voice, or of the excitement he was creating, Gag bumped his black and white head against Mrs. Latimer's face and again gave her the benefit of his tongue.

Catching the big dog by his collar, Juanita, between coaxing and scolding, got him to the door.

"Sharley — show — take — room!" gasped Mrs. Latimer; holding her handkerchief to her ear.

"Find place — for — eh" — she waved her hand feebly toward the maid.

"It 's Ka-r-ty Karney 's me name, mum — from the Lakes o' Killarney," supplied that personage complacently.

"Yes — yes — come right to your room," cried Sharley, starting forward. "Ah, there go your trunks; Ann knows where to have them put. You come, too," turning to the stout person in the sealskin coat, who promptly responded to the summons; and the party passed out into the hall.

"Oh, I think she is ever so pretty!" exclaimed Audrey, the moment the door closed behind them. "Don't you, mother? — so quaint looking. And I 'm glad she 's dark — I love dark girls!"

"H'm! If she is Little John, then I suppose Robin Hood and Friar Tuck, Will Scarlet, and the whole gang 'll be showing up pretty soon," remarked Kittredge, emerging from his place of concealment, minus his cap and with wildly disheveled hair. "What a fuss over that canine! Why, mums, he was only making friends with you. He 's no more mad than I am. Guess we 'll have some fun out of him. Wonder if he knows any tricks?"

Mrs. Latimer sank back on her pillows with a little groan, and her sister-in-law rose to her feet.

"*I* should *never* have advised taking such a girl into your family — no matter what she paid," declared Miss Latimer, tying the ribbons of her fur collar with decision. "But, of course, my advice was not asked. I only hope, Harriet," but

her tone belied her words, "that you will never rue this whole business. What with the girl, and the maid, and that dog — I 'm thankful I live in Philadelphia and not in this house." And Mrs. Latimer had sufficient self-control to refrain from saying that she, too, was glad of that fact.

After which Miss Latimer took her departure.

CHAPTER II

DIVERSE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

"WELL, so she has arrived! How about the feather head-dress and the tomahawk — are they in evidence?" asked Teddy, lounging up against the dining-room door, and watching Sharley put finishing touches to the table, before Ann announced dinner.

Sharley wheeled round to look at her favorite brother. "My dear!" she said, in a low but most expressive voice, "she *is* a case! I am afraid we shall fully earn every cent of that money that we get. What do you think? She 's brought a dog and a maid with her — a great, big, fat thing — without a word to us first to know if it would be convenient or otherwise. And she has insisted on having her occupy the next room — which was Audrey's and Rachie's — *insisted!* We 've had such trouble moving the girls up into the garret — there was no other place, you know. It 's pretty bare, but" —

"Now just hold up a bit," interrupted Teddy, "and let 's get this matter clear. Who is big and fat — the maid or the dog? And who insisted on having Audrey's room — the dog, the maid, or the young female from Anaconda?"

"Oh, you know very well!" exclaimed Sharley, shaking a fork at him. "Why, the Anaconda, of course. The dog's name is Agagio — Kit says he is a thoroughbred; but I feel a little afraid of him. And the maid is Katy Karney. Oh, Ted, she is the funniest looking person! You'll laugh when you see her get-up — French bonnets and sealskin coats galore — the maid, mind you! Well, as I was saying when you so impolitely interrupted, Miss Juanita — John she would like to be called — so silly! — insisted that this maid should have the room next to hers. So we had to bundle Audrey and Rach off to the garret, and let her have it. I don't think 't was a bit nice of her to put us to all that trouble when the maid could have gone upstairs just as well as not. But she *would* have her way, — it's very evident that she is a dreadfully spoiled child, — and I was afraid she would go bother mamma with the story. So I gave in. Now rush upstairs and help mother down; dinner is ready. I've coached Audrey, and fairly implored Kittredge to behave decently, so I hope everything will go off well. The first meal together will be the hardest. After that — why, somehow people and things will sort of adjust themselves, eh? Ann has gone to announce dinner — go for mother, do! I hear the children tearing down the steps — and there's that dog barking. Goodness! I hope she isn't bringing the creature into the dining-room."

"Sure as you live, she is!" declared Ted, — he rather enjoyed teasing Sharley, — adding over his

shoulder, as he turned to go upstairs: "Put his dogship alongside of me — I 'll treat him so well he 'll never forget it!"

But he did not mean this, and on returning to the dining-room with his mother his surprise was great to find the bull terrier occupying a seat at the table. Teddy was fond of dogs, and Agagio's air of gentlemanly restraint, the alert cock of his ears, and the benign glances which he cast at every one amused him highly. This was more than they did Sharley; for after Ted had been introduced to the tall girl in the yellow silk frock, and the slight stir incidental to the various members of the family taking their places was over, it was discovered that there was no room for little Dorothy, the youngest and the darling of the household. Dorothy and Jamie — who was seven — took their dinner at five o'clock, but not for worlds would they have given up the privilege of sitting at table with their elders — one on each side of Sharley; and if a surreptitious, delicious mouthful from the big sister's plate reached them occasionally no one else appeared to know anything of the matter. And now Agagio was seated in Dorrie's own particular chair, beside his mistress; filling it with such an air of ownership as brought quick tears to the little girl's eyes, and a quiver to her lips.

"That dog 's got *my* chair!" she called out loudly; and throwing her plump little body against Sharley, with a wail of disappointment she buried her face on her sister's shoulder.

Sharley's arms went around the small figure.

"There, there, sweetheart!" she said soothingly; "don't cry; Lally (Dorrie's name for her) will find another chair for you. Sh!"

A wave of indignation went round the table, which Little John quietly ignored. Leaning forward she helped herself liberally from a small dish of jelly, and, spreading some thickly on a slice of bread, — holding the bread on the palm of her hand, — she proceeded to break it into large pieces and to feed them to Gag.

Little Jamie jumped from his chair. "Here, Dorrie, you take my place," he said, his childish voice full of indignation. Audrey gave vent to an astonished "Well! — I declare!" and half rose from the table. Kit remarked, in a loud stage whisper, "That 's what you might call dogged impudence," at which Rach giggled uncertainly. Mrs. Latimer leaned forward, a look of distressed annoyance in her eyes at sight of Agagio, the color deepening in her thin cheeks. "My dear — I — eh — I — cannot allow that dog at the table," she said. There was a slight quiver in her voice, and Teddy noticed that the fingers of the frail little hand lying on the tablecloth were fluttering nervously. It was always an effort for Mrs. Latimer to assert herself, — how great an effort only two of her children — Sharley and Ted — as yet understood.

"Oh, I *always* have Gag dine with me at the hotel," replied Juanita calmly, and proceeded to spread another slice of bread, which Agagio awaited with glistening eyes and a mouth that was watering.

But he was not to receive the choice morsel, for just then Teddy arose, to the full height of his six feet one, and, filled with a wrath that was barely held within bounds, marched around the table, and seizing Gag under the shoulders, whisked him out of the chair, out of the room, before either the big dog or his mistress had time to realize what was happening.

The whole thing was over in a very few minutes; but when Ted returned to his place Dorrie was in possession of her chair, and everybody, save "the young person from Anaconda," as Kit had already nicknamed the stranger, was laughing — the younger children uproariously. Gag's astonished face and the frantic, futile waving of his fore-legs in the air as he made his hurried exit had set them laughing.

"Oh, if you had seen his face! It was too funny!" laughed Audrey, as Ted sat down.

"A case of rapid transit," chuckled Kit; and Dorrie's merry shouts rose above all the laughter, as she bounced joyously up and down in her chair. Even Mrs. Latimer was smiling. The only sober face was that of Juanita — until she looked up and caught Ted's eyes as he took his seat again.

Audrey had once described her elder brother to a girl friend who had never seen him. "He is a tall, long-legged fellow," she said, "with a way of standing that always reminds me of a restive horse, — you know, lounging first on one foot, then on the other. And he 's got the *nicest* face! He looks enough like David Copperfield to be David's own

brother; we often call him Copperfield for fun, — I mean like Cruikshank's illustrations, — only of course Teddy does n't wear those old-fashioned clothes. But he has the same nice, innocent, dear sort of face that Davy had — that made the barmaid kiss him instead of taking his money for the glass of ale — when he was a little chap with Murdstone and Grinby. Don't you remember? Ted is n't what you might call handsome, but we think," nodding at Sharley, who was present, "that when he smiles he comes pretty near it. And he has such honest eyes!" And now, as Little John glanced across the table and met the frank, steady gaze of her opposite neighbor's blue-gray eyes, she suddenly changed her mind about being disagreeable, and instead laughed. It was a merry laugh, that not only sent her little pointed chin up in the air, and brought two rows of small, white, shining teeth into evidence, but as well flashed a sparkle into the soft, sombre eyes, making her very pleasant to look at.

"He did look funny," she admitted, "but you caught him unawares, else he never 'd have gone off so quietly. He does n't like having his feelings hurt. But," with a sudden change of tone, "he is an awfully smart dog. You should see him play 'Hunt the Handkerchief' — he 'll hunt everywhere until he finds it — just like a person. And," waving an emphatic little forefinger, "he understands — every — single — word — I say. Some time I 'll make him show off. D' you like dogs?" Ignoring the enthusiastic chorus of as-

sent from Audrey and the younger children, she looked straight at Teddy for an answer. "D' you like dogs?" she repeated.

"Sure!" was the boyish, characteristic reply. "When my ship comes in I intend to have thirteen or fourteen of 'em around all the time, — like Sir Walter Scott had. I 'll have all kinds — mastiffs, hounds, bulldogs — oh yes, and setters — they are *beauts!* You know — red-brown curly coats, and eyes to match — brown, not curly," with a merry laugh at himself, "and with those big, floppy ears." Ted waved his hands about his own ears as he spoke, to aid description.

"Yes, I know," nodded Little John. "Daddy gave me one, — a real Irish setter, — he sent East for it; and I named it Barney. He is almost as tall as this table, and his coat is just as thick and *curly!* — a beauty. I was going to bring him and Gag on, but they *would* fight! Gag was jealous of him — actually he was. I guess he was afraid I 'd like Barney the best, though I would n't have, you know. So I sent Barney out to the ranch where the other dogs are. We 've got a *lot* of them there. Oh! — tell you what," as an idea flashed into her mind; she leaned forward in the most friendly fashion, "we 've got more dogs than we know what to do with — first class they are, too, like Agagio, with ped— peda— oh, you know, that thing that tells who their fathers and mothers were — and I 'll write daddy to send you on three, right away. I know *just* the ones you 'd like — Brady, for one; he 's a mastiff; my!

but *is n't* he a jumbo! and Rocks — he 's a Russian hound; and Barney. I can show you all about taking care of 'em, — you know they have to have different kinds of food, — and Brady eats an awful lot. Oh, I know you 'll think they 're perfectly *splendid!* I 'll write dad!" She pushed her chair a little away from the table, as if she meditated rising, though dinner was not more than half over.

But Ted hastily detained her. "Thanks awfully — you 're *very* kind, I 'm sure," he said quickly; "but — eh — um "— getting red and embarrassed, though his eyes were dancing with fun — "eh — we have n't room — we — eh — can't keep dogs. Please don't send for them."

"Oh, but there 's *plenty* of room," Juanita assured him. "You 've got a yard, and, besides, the house is large; they could run all over it." Mrs. Latimer's face was a study, and Sharley's look of disgusted horror amused Ted, but the other members of the family saw nothing objectionable in the proposition.

"I 'll write to-night," continued Little John, "and they 'll be here in about — well — in about ten days. I guess they could n't very well come sooner."

"No, no, *please* don't send for them," urged Ted. "Really — I 'd rather you would n't — though, of course, you 're awfully kind to offer." Then he added bluntly: "The truth is, we 're poor people — and we can't *afford* to keep expensive dogs."

"Oh — oh!" said Juanita in a tone of astonishment. Mrs. Latimer and Sharley exchanged uncomfortable glances, and a low murmur of disappointment was heard from Kit and the younger children.

There was a short silence, then Juanita began, with a slightly appealing note in her voice: "Daddy has stacks and *stacks* of stuff to feed the dogs with — I don't know if it'd keep — but he could send" —

"*No*, I thank you — not for me," broke in Teddy brusquely. "By the way, Sharley," leaning forward and pointedly addressing his sister, "who do you think I met to-day? Roger — Roger Burton. He's back from Denver, and looks fine as a fiddle — immense! Never had such a good time in his life. He said he and Grey Anderson would be round this or to-morrow evening."

With a sudden increase of color, Sharley hastened to respond, and the conversation drifted into other channels.

Little John paid slight, if any, attention to what was being said. She had pushed her plate far from her; it lay stranded somewhere near the centre of the table, with knife and fork hanging on to its edges and sprawling their full length over the white cloth.

"Do look! Anaconda manners," whispered Kit, nudging Rachel's elbow. "Would n't we catch it, though, if one of us did that!" And Rach, who always followed Kit's lead, joined in his giggle.

All unconscious of their scrutiny, Little John lounged off in her chair and gazed about her, with a puzzled expression in her black eyes, at the remains of the plentiful but extremely simple dinner which had been served with such beautiful silver and glass; at the dining-room furniture, which was so solid and handsome; at the curtains, carpet, and portières so worn and faded, and at the plain, really shabby clothes of some members of the family. Juanita decided that Katy Karney "would n't have been *seen*" in the gown Sharley had on. This Anaconda girl possessed a keen appreciation — enjoyment — of pretty clothes, and what Mr. Ruskin would call a "noble admiration" for bright colors. Her sharp eyes made note that Audrey's evening waist was homemade; that Kit's arms were too long for his faded jacket sleeves; and that Mrs. Latimer's little fleecy shoulder cape covered more than one patch. And yet she wore diamond rings as handsome as any of those on Juanita's slender brown little hands. But none of the girls wore any jewelry — probably they had none, thought Juanita; and she felt sorry for them. The girl was puzzled — diamonds and silver and glass, and a big house handsomely furnished, yet they wore such old dowdy clothes, and could n't afford to keep three dogs!

But were they really poor? Juanita had known very few poor people in her life; even Katy had money, — daddy had invested it for her, — and nearly every man on the ranch had his "little pile" in bank or stocks, or could have had it by

ordinary economy; money had not been scarce in Anaconda. One of her so-called governesses had made no secret of being poor; she had been of a meek nature; her pupil had called her "cringing" and a "door mat," and had openly taken delight in "walking over" her. Juanita thought of her and decided that she "despised" poor people. But daddy had spoken of these Latimers as if they were very grand; he had been really glad to have her go to live with them. And Katy certainly considered them very fine. She had aired the opinion to Juanita while dressing her for dinner that they were "the rale illigant quality folk, an' that 's plain 's the nose on yer face. Sure, Miss Wannie, it 's yerself 'll be gettin' that fond of um that in no toime at all ye 'll all be ez thick ez paes." But to-night "Miss Wannie" had serious doubts on that score.

Glancing slowly around the table, in the most open manner, she concluded that she liked Mrs. Latimer; she was so pretty; and though she would probably not have been willing to admit it, even to herself, that kiss of welcome, ungraciously as it had been received, had touched the girl's wayward heart. Audrey, too, she thought, looked nice. Perhaps they two would get to be friends, and she certainly would be friends with that tall boy they called Teddy. Not at all so sure was she concerning Rachel and Kit, who came next in order. She had a strong suspicion that that boy made fun of people, and that the girl just egged him on, which was a libel on poor Rach, who was

Kittredge's devoted slave, and generally a victim to his teasing. As for Sharley, Juanita made up her mind then and there that no matter what kind of "quality" she might turn out to be, Sharley and she could never, *never* become anything like "ez thick ez paes."

A sudden stir, a pushing back of chairs, and Little John awoke from her reverie to find that she had eaten her dessert, that dinner was quite over, and everybody going into the drawing-room.

"Oh! *did n't* she eat queerly — with her *knife!*" whispered Rach, sidling up to Kittredge as they made their way from the table. "She did n't say two words, except to Teddy, 'bout dogs — just sat there and stuffed her dinner down."

"Wish we could 'ave had those dogs," remarked Kit regretfully; then, with a patronizing glance at his "kid sister," as he was fond of calling Rach, much to her annoyance, he added: "Well, you see, she 's an anaconda; that 's the way they do — stuff 'emselves, and then lie torpid for ever so long. I suppose, now, she won't have a word to say for" — He stopped abruptly, giving Rach a sudden sharp nudge of his elbow that arrested halfway her astonished, credulous, "Why, Kit! an anacond—" Kit was wont to say that it was great fun to "stuff" Rach, "for she never sees a joke till you actually *hit* her with it;" and now with wide-open, wondering eyes she began, "Why! what 's the mat—?" when Juanita's angry voice broke in and furnished an explanation.

"You were saying things about me! You need n't deny it!" she asserted loudly.

"*Was* I? *I?*" cried Kit, with an expression of the most injured innocence, though his eyes were twinkling, and he could scarcely keep a straight face. "I was giving Rach a short lesson in natural history," he declared; "telling her the habits of one of our large snakes. You can ask her. Are *you* a serpent? Just answer me that."

Little John eyed him wrathfully; she felt her suspicions to be correct, but she had no knowledge then of the relationship of an anaconda to the snake family, or that any snake of that name existed. "You 're a *rude* boy!" she finally informed Kit, with a good deal of emphasis, and, sweeping past him, flounced herself down upon a sofa in the drawing-room, looking decidedly sulky. She refused all the attempts of the family to amuse or interest her, and answered Mrs. Latimer's gentle "You are studying music, your father wrote me, my dear; will you not play something for us?" with a curt, "No, I don't feel like playing to-night."

When Agagio suddenly shot into the room, delighted to have escaped from the detaining powers below, and brimming over with doggish exuberance, she gave him an effusive welcome, and immediately started a violent game of romps. Regardless of the noise they made, — neither Gag nor his mistress could play quietly, — regardless of Sharley's polite but earnest remonstrance, she and the terrier tore around one end of the large drawing-room, knocking down chairs and scram-

bling over the handsome, cherished furniture in a reckless manner that aroused Sharley's anger, highly delighted Kit and the younger children, and reduced Mrs. Latimer to the verge of hysterics, though she kept imploring her eldest son and daughter not to interfere. But soon she was obliged to give in. "I cannot stand that noise any longer!" she exclaimed, both hands pressed against her temples. "Oh, somebody stop it — *do!*"

And just then, while Teddy was casting uneasy, inquiring glances at Sharley, asking her aid in this dilemma, the game came suddenly to an end.

Catching Gagio by the collar, Juanita pulled him to the drawing-room door, and shoved him out into the hall. "There!" she said, "you 've had enough fun for to-night. Go straight upstairs to Katy. D' you hear me, sir? — *go!*" stamping her foot. Then, turning back into the room, she added, with a pleasant, comprehensive glance that included all present, "I won't play to-night, but if somebody 'll get my mandolin, I 'll sing and dance for you."

Kittredge immediately offered his services as messenger, which were as promptly declined, and Audrey ran upstairs for the mandolin, while Mrs. Latimer sank back on her cushions with a sigh of relief.

"Did you ever see such airs!" smilingly asked Sharley in Teddy's ear. "She seems to feel quite certain that we 'll be delighted to watch her gyrate. Pity she 's so spoiled!"

"Her dad 's a bloomin' millionaire, and she

thinks she owns the earth," growled Teddy, looking intensely bored. "If I were sure Roger would n't be here, I 'd get out of this, double-quick, and go for a walk." He crossed the room and stood lounging against the door, ready to slip out at short notice.

Juanita took the mandolin from Audrey without a thought of thanks, and began tightening up and testing the strings. When this was accomplished to her satisfaction, she announced, "I 'll give you a serenade first," and then disappeared into the hall. In an instant she was back again, running into the room with a little theatrical flourish, the mandolin slung across her shoulders by a ribbon, and, making the assembled company a low, sweeping bow, she sang: —

"'Buenas noches, Teresita mia,
Dulces suenos te espera
Una serenada de mi amor
Una cancion te canta
Duermete, duermete, Teresita mia,
Luz de mis ojos,
Luna de mi alma,
Duermete entiende la vos de mi passion!
Adios, adios, Teresita,
Adios, adios, Teresita!'"[1]

[1] "Good-night, fairest Teresita mia,
May guardian angels evermore defend thee,
Sweetest visions in thy sleep attend thee,
While I sing my serenade to thee.
Slumber darling Teresita mia,
Light of mine eyes and bright
Star of my soul,
Sleep while I sing my serenade to thee!
Farewell then, ah, fare thee well, Teresita,
Farewell then, ah, fare thee well, Teresita!"

Her voice was not very strong, and it had yet in it some of the tones of a child; but it was sweet and clear as a wild bird's note, and she sang with expression — a little too much sometimes, putting her hand on her heart and casting her eyes up to the ceiling in a fashion that set Kit a-giggle, and brought a smile to the lips of more than one in the audience. But the applause which arose when the last notes died away satisfied the singer, and she made a pretty picture standing in her yellow silk frock in the full glare of the chandeliers, a faint dash of color in her clear, pale face, her hair tossed about, her soft eyes shining; bowing to right and left, smiling and kissing her hands.

"When I sing at the hotel, the whole place is just *packed* with people to hear me," she informed them, with a gleeful laugh. "And oftentimes bokays are thrown to me." Whereupon Kittredge caught up a sofa cushion and threw it at her feet, clapping his hands and crying, "Brava!"

But without vouchsafing him even a glance, Little John kicked the cushion aside. "Now, I'll dance for you," she said graciously, and holding out her full yellow silk skirts on each side, she floated off, with a twang of the mandolin now and then, keeping time to a sweet, gay little song that yet held in it a touch of sadness, the refrain of which was, —

> "'Tu cara las ocho, alla vendran bonitas,
> Danzar el bolero, danzar el bolero, danzar el bolero.'

"Old Pedro taught me that dance," she said, as she stopped, breathless, to receive more applause.

"He works on dad's ranch — he can't dance a step himself, but he taught me. Oh! I could go on all night!" She was in high spirits, and it was considerable of a comedown to be told, a little while after, by Sharley, that it was nine o'clock, and bedtime for herself and Audrey. Juanita stiffened visibly, and threw her little pointed chin mutinously up in the air; then, as Audrey's arm went, girl-fashion, over her shoulders, and Audrey said persuasively, "Come on, we 'll go up together," Juanita made a wry face, laughed, and, marching over to Mrs. Latimer's lounge, to that lady's surprise and pleasure, stooped and kissed her. "Good-night!" she said brusquely to the other members of the family, with a careless nod.

The two girls were halfway up the stairs when Teddy came out into the hall to put on his hat. He was going to "stretch his legs" in a walk.

"Oh!" exclaimed Juanita, drawing her arm out of Audrey's, "wait for me a minute." She ran down a few steps and leaned over the banisters. "Good-night," she called to the tall young man, putting out to him a slender, brown little hand.

Teddy came immediately over and shook hands, smiling up at her with what Audrey called his "Copperfield" smile — truly, it was as genial and kindly as anything that Davy himself could have accomplished in that line. "Good-night, Miss Kyle," he said in a very friendly tone; "I hope you 'll sleep well and feel quite rested by to-morrow."

"*Miss Kyle!*" echoed Juanita, drawing down the corners of her mouth; then she added with a sudden gracious condescension that highly amused Ted, "I shall call you Teddy; and you may say John — I don't like Juanita — I *hate* it! — and it really means Little John. Daddy calls me that, and you may, too."

"Thank you," said Teddy, with becoming humility. "Well, Little John, *buenas noches!*"

"*Buenas noches!*" answered Juanita, and the two girls ran gayly up the steps.

Laughing merrily, Juanita sprang into the room, where — tired after her long journey — Katy Karney sat nodding, slammed the door firmly, and, throwing herself headlong upon the bed, broke into a storm of tears.

"Eh! eh! me pretty wan! who's been afther throublin' you?" cried Katy, at once on the alert. "Shorely none av them foine young ladies have hurted yer feelin's!"

"Oh, Katy! nobody here cares one snap for me!" sobbed Little John. "Nobody *at all!* I want to go home — where people love me. I want the hotel — and the ranch — and Pedro and the dogs! And oh! *oh!* — I want my daddy, my dear old daddy! I want him now, here, this very minute, to love and pet me. Oh, I want *daddy!*" In an abandonment of grief, she clutched the pillow, and beat wildly upon the bed with her little slippered feet.

"An' if it's homesick ye are, acushla, it's Ka-r-ty'll be afther pettin' you to yer heart's con-

tent," declared the faithful nurse. Climbing upon the bed, she gathered the weeping girl into her stout arms, and rocked her gently to and fro, with many soothing, comforting words of endearment.

CHAPTER III

UNEXPECTED GOOD FORTUNE

It was quite two weeks before Mrs. Latimer's plans — they were really Sharley's — for the education of her new charge could be carried out. And in that time, as Audrey gravely remarked, "the family made some discoveries about Juanita, and Juanita about the family." Sharley's opinion that "the young person from Anaconda" was spoiled, willful, and overbearing received confirmation, and Little John's early dislike of the older girl grew and strengthened.

One of the first points of disagreement between them was that of the governess. "I will *not* have a governess!" Juanita informed her stormily. "I *despise* 'em! I didn't come all the way to New York for that. I *won't* have one! — I want to go to a regular school where I can meet other girls, and see people. I'm *positive* daddy wouldn't let me be penned up in the house with any horrid, tiresome old governess! I'll just settle the matter at once." And racing down to Mrs. Latimer's room, she poured out her grievance so vehemently and urged her request with such persuasiveness as quite upset that lady's judgment, and very soon sent Juanita upstairs again, loudly triumphant.

"Why, mother dear, you surely have n't given in to that spoiled child!" exclaimed Sharley, hurrying into her mother's room a few minutes after Juanita's exit.

The color sprang into Mrs. Latimer's delicate face, her fingers began fluttering nervously. "I could n't help it, Sharley," she said deprecatingly. "You know it 's her father's money that will pay for it."

"Yes, but we are to educate her out of what he pays us, and you know how awfully expensive a good private school in the city is," urged Sharley. "There will be precious little money left if we do *that!* And what about Audrey and Rach and the two younger children? A governess in the house could have taught them as well as Juanita" — She stopped abruptly, regretting her impetuous remarks as she caught sight of the anxious, harassed expression that had come into her mother's eyes.

"Well — I can't help it — it 's done now," remarked Mrs. Latimer despairingly. "I said she should go — she urged it so, Sharley. And it is really her father's money — I *had* to say yes. Oh! oh!" her voice shaking; "I had hoped *so* much from this new scheme! — and now my poor children will have to grow up ignoramuses — with no instruction — no advantages whatever! I can see that you think it 's my fault — but I could n't help it — I *could n't!*" She buried her face in her handkerchief and sobbed.

In a moment Sharley was kneeling beside the lounge, her arm around her mother. "Why,

dearest mother, I 'm not blaming you — as if I would do such a thing!" she cried earnestly, catching one hot, nervous little hand, and beginning to stroke and smooth it lovingly with her own strong, cool fingers. "That girl made you feel you simply *had* to give in to her. Yes, I know that way she has. Don't worry about the matter, precious mother; your health and happiness are worth far more to us than *any*thing else. And no doubt it 'll all come right for the children — we 'll see. I 'm like Mr. Micawber, you know; I have great faith that something — something good — will turn up. Anyway, we won't worry. Now, let me 'plump' up your pillows and make you 'comfy.' As if I would ever blame my dear, sweet, pretty little mother — no matter *what* she might do!" as she spoke kissing the frail hand that lay in her own.

Meanwhile, after flaunting her victory in Sharley's face, so to speak, Juanie went in search of Audrey, between whom and herself a strong friendship had sprung up, Audrey's willingness not to address her by the obnoxious name of Juanita having won Little John's heart from the first. The other members of the family, however, with the exception of Teddy, when he remembered it, absolutely refused to follow suit. Since the unexpected arrival of Katy Karney, Audrey had been relegated to the garret; and there Juanita now found her, in a large room that looked westward. The furnishings were very bare, mostly such as could be spared from other rooms at the time of the

hasty settling, and Juanita had frankly aired her opinion of them.

Good-natured Audrey had not reminded her of how it happened that she was in the garret room instead of Katy.

"Oh, it is n't very fine," she had admitted carelessly, "and the windows *are* smaller than those downstairs; but I like that long, narrow shape, and the deep, low window seats. It 's sort of quaint; and as for the sunsets — they 're simply gorgeous! I like it up here; and you wait till this corner is all fixed up — see if you don't like it, too."

She had been "fixing it up" this day, and was standing back looking at her work with satisfaction when Juanita came in. Leaving the rest of the big, bare apartment as hopeless, Audrey had devoted her energies to one corner. She had thrown an old Sorrento blanket over an ugly cot, transforming it into a broad, comfortable lounge, and making a bit of color pleasant to look at. Not far from the lounge, and drawn forward to form a sort of inclosure, stood her little white desk, and a set of long, rather low bookshelves, which were filled to overflowing. On the top of the shelves were ranged her treasures, chief among them a small plaster cast of the Winged Victory, and a round, framed print of the Mater Dolorosa. A narrow, faded, almost worn-out but still pretty Oriental rug lay on the floor, and in the window seat were heaped all the cushions she owned or had been able to coax from Sharley.

"Is n't this just as 'comfy as comfy can be'?" she called to Juanie, standing with her fair head a little on one side, a pleased smile on her lips, surveying her handiwork.

"I've just squelched it about that old gov—" Juanita was saying; then, leaving her sentence unfinished, she ran forward. "*Does n't* it look nice!" she exclaimed. "Guess I'll be oftener up here than down in my own room — mine is n't half so cosy as this. Oh, what a lot of books! All yours?"

"Indeed they are," answered Audrey proudly, her eyes lighting up. "Most of them I got Christmases and birthdays — I'd rather have books for presents than anything else — and some I saved up for and bought with my own money. They are all nice, but these are *dears!*" sweeping her hand across the top shelf, where "Little Women," "The Old-Fashioned Girl," "The Water Babies," "Lorna Doone," "Undine and Sintram," "The Lady of the Lake," "Alice in Wonderland," and a much-worn copy of Tennyson's Poems stood shoulder to shoulder with many other old favorites. "I've read them scores of times. Oh! if I ever get rich I'll have books — books — books — from ceiling to floor!" waving her long arms about — "and time to read them! And I'll have statuary and pictures — oh, *lots* of them!" Then, with much pride, she began pointing out her treasures.

Juanita was not at all impressed with the Victory. "I would n't give that old broken, headless thing houseroom!" she declared, putting up her chin contemptuously. But she was very much in-

terested in some spirited little pen-and-ink sketches of Audrey's which were pinned up on the wall, and asserted her intention of buying a Mater Dolorosa the next time she went out.

"I know a shop where you can get a larger one than mine — a beauty!" said Audrey eagerly. "Oh, the photographs and engravings there are too beautiful for anything! When I go there I just fall into a dream over them, and an hour flies away like a minute. We 'll stop in there some afternoon after" —

"Oh — *yes!*" interrupted Juanita, suddenly remembering what she had come to tell, "some afternoon on our way home from school. I 'm going to school — did you know? I told your mother just now that I *would n't* have a governess, and she says I may go to a private school — here in the city. I guess it 'll be Miss Gray's. I know two girls there, and they have perfectly elegant times. I know she 'll let you go, too, if you just speak up and say you *will* go. Why! what 's the matter?" For with a sharp exclamation, Audrey had sat down abruptly on the window ledge, and was gazing up at her friend, distress on her face.

"No governess — Miss Gray's school!" she said weakly. Her under lip began to quiver. "Then there 'll be no French and German for me — no music for Rach — no school for *any* of us!" Her tone was one of despair.

Juanita opened her eyes in the greatest amazement. "Well, if there was n't — would you care?" she asked. "Why — I *despise* school! And any-

way, you can go to Miss Gray's with me. We 'll have twice, three times the fun there."

"Yes, I *do* care — I *love* to study!" Audrey answered. A passionate ring came into her voice, her fair face got rosy, her sleepy eyes widened and grew bright. "I want to learn all I can — I want to go to college, and by and by, when I 've graduated, be able to teach and make money to help the family. I love languages. I 'm sure I could amount to something in them. But I can't learn without instruction. And there 's Rach — losing every bit of her music. We have n't had a governess for *two* winters; and Sharley 's so busy, taking care of mother, keeping house, and sewing for us all, that she has n't a minute to give anybody lessons in. She 's letting her own music go because she has n't time to practice. And now!" — Audrey choked up; then added quickly, with a hopeless little wave of her hand, "Don't talk about Miss Gray for me. If we are so poor we can't keep a governess, how do you suppose mother could afford to send me to such an expensive school as Miss Gray's? She *could n't.* And if she *should* offer to send me — which she won't — can't — how could I be so contemptibly mean as to take all that money and leave the other children without a single advantage?" She turned hastily and looked out of the window to hide two great tears that came tumbling out of her eyes.

Little John stood looking down at Audrey, very puzzled; such scruples were new to her — and such an interest in study! "Why don't you people sell

this great big house, or the handsome furniture, or some of your mother's diamonds? That would give you a lot of money for other things," she said presently, with the practical common sense of her father's daughter.

Audrey brushed off her tears and faced round immediately. "Indeed, we would 've done it long ago, if we could!" she said eagerly. "But you see it 's this way: Grandpa gave us the house and furniture — not papa. He gave it to us children; and not a *thing* can be sold until Dorrie is eighteen — she is six now! So with the diamonds. He divided grandma's jewels between aunt Angela and us four girls, — mother only wears them to please us, — but they are not to be distributed among us until Dorrie gets of age. I don't think grandpa dreamed we 'd ever be so poor — we were n't until papa died — or he would never have made such a will. If we could even rent the house furnished we could take a smaller, cheap one, or an apartment, and so have more money for education and other expenses. But we can't rent for nothing, you know, and nobody seems to want to pay what we ask. So we just have to stay on here, and, as Sharley says, be thankful we 've a roof over our heads. Now you understand that I could n't go to Miss Gray's — don't you? But perhaps Sharley would n't like my telling you all this," Audrey added uneasily, sitting up straight, and with a sudden change of voice, as sundry warnings came back to her mind.

"Don't you bother your head about what *she*

says," remarked Juanita, with more force than elegance. "She just loves to boss people."

"Who — Sharley? Indeed, you are quite mistaken," spoke up Audrey warmly. "She has a quick way of speaking, sometimes; but if you knew her! — why, she does n't mean a *thing* by it. Sharley is just as capable as she can be — she can do *any*thing; she 's a splendid housekeeper — mother often says she does n't see how she ever makes our small income go as far as she does. She always knows what to do when things happen — and that 's such a comfort — I *never* could do it. You see she 's had to take the lead, on account of her being the eldest and mother's having been ill so long, — ever since Dorrie was a baby. I can tell you Sharley has been an *aw*fully good sister to us all. I *ought* to help her more round the house; I mean to, but," regretfully, "I do forget things so that I don't like to do. The reason I thought she might object to my telling so much is this — Sharley says: 'We 're poor, and we know it; but we need n't keep telling other people about it all the time, and moaning over it. Keep your affairs to yourself,' she tells us, 'and always put the best foot first.' She might think I had been 'moaning' to you. Have I? I did n't mean to."

"And a governess in the house could teach me and you and the children too? — music and — everything else?" remarked Juanita irrelevantly. She had sat down on the Sorrento-covered lounge, and was gazing absently out at the fast

gathering gloom of the November afternoon. It is doubtful if she had heard Audrey's concluding remarks.

"Oh yes, Miss Achison, the one mother thought of engaging, would, and she speaks beautiful German. And a Parisian was to have given us French twice a week." Audrey sighed, then, noticing the little scowl that was drawing Jaunita's slender eyebrows together, she said hastily, and as cheerfully as she could: "Don't bother over what I've said, Juan. I hope you'll enjoy it at Miss Gray's. You must tell me all you have to do there, and all about the girls. Perhaps mother'll let me walk up to school with you mornings, or down of an afternoon. Then we could stop and see the pictures, could n't we?"

"Miss Wannie! is it afther bein' up there ye are?" drawled Katy from the foot of the attic stairs. "Shure it's toime to be dhressin' fer dinner."

Juanita sprang up, stretched her long, slim arms over her head with a yawn, and started for the hall without a word. But before she reached the door Audrey, disturbed by a sudden misgiving, was beside her, her hand on the other girl's arm. "Juanie, you don't mind my having spoken out so plainly about the governess, do you?" she asked anxiously. "I'm afraid I said too much; but I was so disap— so surprised — that the words just came out. If mother consented to your going to Miss Gray's school, why, of course you will — and I hope you'll have a *lovely* time! Now it's all

right between us — is n't it?" she urged, with winning earnestness, peering up into Juanita's face, which was barely visible in the fast darkening room.

Little John laughed out. "You 're a regular goose!" she declared, adding with sudden warmth: "I just wish I were a fair girl — like you, Audrey, and had blue eyes, and a lovely thick braid — instead of my short, curly wig!" She threw her arms around Audrey, and gave her such an unexpected hug that their noses bumped; then rushed headlong into the hall and down the stairs, almost falling over Katy, who sat on a step, patiently waiting.

Straight went Juanita to Mrs. Latimer's room; her knock and entrance were simultaneous. Sharley was still with her mother; the mending-basket was on the floor beside her, and she was sewing industriously as she rocked and talked. Mrs. Latimer was sitting up on her lounge with cushions at her back, mending a pair of Jamie's stockings. They were conversing in an undertone, and both looked up as Juanita came forward with a rush.

"I 've changed my mind about going to a private school," she announced in her clear, positive tones — there was a slight touch of irritation in them now. "So you can get the governess just as quick 's you like."

"Oh, you *dear* child!" exclaimed Mrs. Latimer with a gasp of intense relief. Sharley's heart, too, gave a little joyful bound; but she only asked coolly — suspiciously, the other girl thought:

"Why this sudden change? Who has been talking to you?"

"I changed my mind because I felt like it — because I chose to — not for *you!*" returned Juanita, tossing her head.

The color flooded Sharley's face. "You are exceedingly rude!" she retorted with equal bluntness.

Mrs. Latimer hastily reached out and, catching Juanita's hand, drew the girl to her side. "My dear, I am *very* glad you have come to this conclusion," she said heartily. "And I am sure you will like Miss Achison. Sharley will write her to begin at once. You can't think what a relief this is to my mind!"

Little John felt very much like saying, "Well, I just guess I *do* know!" but Mrs. Latimer's soft blue eyes, the touch of the nervous, fluttering fingers, had always a curious, appealing effect on the wayward girl; and now, in response to a persuasive, "Sit down here by me, Juanita, and let us have a little chat," she found herself forced to obey. Rather sulkily she mumbled something about "dressing for dinner;" and glaring at Sharley, who was gathering up her work with an air of great dignity, and preparing to leave the room, she dropped into the chair beside the lounge.

"Miss Achison is an excellent" — began Mrs. Latimer, sinking back on her pillows, and commencing to stroke the little brown hand she still held in hers.

But just at this moment the door opened and

Teddy walked in, bringing with him a rush of the outside air, and a face so bright, so elated, that Sharley involuntarily took a step forward, crying out: "Well, what is it? You 've got good news. I see it in your face!"

Mrs. Latimer sat up hastily, her fingers tightening on Juanita's hand. "Oh, Teddy, what is it?" she asked apprehensively.

With a merry laugh Ted strode forward and, twisting a chair around, seated himself astride of it, looking at them with dancing eyes over the low back. "'I could a tale unfold,'" he said, with a tragic gesture, "and I will. Nothing to worry about, mums — all is serene. Now gaze on me," he went on, in his whimsical way. "Who do you behold? 'The same Theodore Latimer that we 've seen scores and scores of times,' you will remark. 'Ay, the same, yet not the same,' say I. ''Cause why?' you ask. And I answer, ''Cause now I 'm Theodore Latimer, manager of the great American Hemp and Jute Company,' which I was n't this morning, and never expected to be. I have the pleasure of introducing myself!" Throwing back the lapels of his coat with an important flourish, he rose, and, still astride of the chair, made the assembled company a low and as graceful a bow as circumstances would allow.

"Why *Ted* — whatever do you" — began Sharley, bewildered.

"I don't understand!" exclaimed Mrs. Latimer a little excitedly. "I wish you would speak plainly. *What* has happened?"

Juanita's big black eyes were fixed intently on him.

Teddy beamed on them all. "To speak plainly, to be brief and to the point," he said, with a broad smile, "from being one of the junior clerks — an insignificant individual, unknown to fame or fortune — I have at one bound become of considerable importance in the great establishment. Our president, Mr. Jarvis, has this afternoon made me manager of the whole business! And, pleasant to relate, has doubled my salary! Now, is that plain enough?"

"Oo! — oo! *oo!* you *dear* boy!" cried Sharley, dancing about Ted with a girlish delight that astonished Juanita — twenty-two seems a very dignified and advanced age to sixteen!

"Mr. Jarvis was your father's friend — this is for James's sake!" exclaimed Mrs. Latimer with tearful joy. "It is certainly very nice of him."

"Nice?" echoed Ted. "Well! I should say that was putting it mildly. There is n't a fellow in that office but would 've stood on his head 'most, to get this place. I almost fell over, so to speak, when the old man broke the news to me. I never dreamed that such greatness would ever be thrust upon *me*."

"Oh, tell us all about it — tell us what he said — do!" urged Juanita, bending eagerly forward, her eyes big with interest.

Sharley started; in her delight over Ted's good news she had forgotten the girl's presence. An expression of annoyance flitted across her face.

"Oh! wait till by and by," she said quickly, giving Ted a little warning poke with her elbow. "It is almost time to get ready for dinner — is n't it?" She addressed all who were present, then looked pointedly at Juanita.

"No, I 'll not wait — I 'm going to tell my story now," returned that provoking Teddy, regardless of the poke. "If you have a grand toilet to make for dinner, or something to do that lies heavy on your mind, why just tear yourself away. Mother and Little John will remain and listen to me." Ignoring his sister's expressive eyes, he got up and took another chair, where, comfortably settled with one leg folded across the knee of the other leg, bringing into view a wide extent of blue-and-red dotted sock, and one hand clasping his ankle, he began his story.

"You want to know how it happened," he said, enjoying the position of historian. "Well, I was pegging away at my desk as usual, when O. T. — that 's our president, Mr. Jarvis; among ourselves we call him by his initials, for short, you know — sent for me. Well, when he sends for anybody that way it 's mostly to give a fellow a rap about something that 's askew — sometimes to give him his walking papers. Nobody exactly *pines* for an interview with him! So my first thought was, 'Now what 's up for me?' and I can tell you I did n't rush into the office — as I rushed out — with joy written all over me. He was sitting at his desk writing when I walked in. 'Take a seat, Theodore,' he said, sort of gruff — he never wastes

words; and he did n't look up. So down I sat, and while he went on writing his letter, I meditated — and they were n't rose-colored meditations, either. Well, in about sixteen seconds I had the whole thing laid out in my mind. I could just *see* myself walking out of that office — coming in here to tell mother I 'd lost my job — when, behold! O. T. lays down his pen and begins making a few remarks. Gee! how he did quiz me!" Teddy slapped his ankle and indulged in mirth at the recollection.

"I hope you could answer him!" "What did he quiz you about?" remarked Mrs. Latimer and Juanita in the same breath.

"It *ju-st* happened that I was posted on every single thing he struck on," answered Ted. "Oh, he asked every imaginable and unimaginable question," glancing at Juanita: "about the hemp — the jute — in the raw state — in the finished; tried me with some samples — made me quote the market. Well, — I thought he 'd *never* get through! And all the time with those sharp eyes of his planted square on me — tell you, 't was enough to 've rattled a cast-iron monkey! But I got through all right, — I must have, you know, — for presently he says, in that short, off-hand way he has, 'From to-day on, you are manager of the American Hemp and Jute Company, with an increase of salary; and I expect your father's son to be up to the mark in every particular.' Then he went on to say a lot more, — about the new duties, I suppose; but I can't remember a word

he said. To tell you the truth, the first grand announcement had knocked me so silly that I hardly knew if I were on my head or my heels, or if O. T. were talking English or Choctaw. I *think* I thanked him, but I would n't swear to it. I have n't the slightest recollection of doing it. I only hope I did n't make a bloomin' fool of myself. Queer how a thing like that can upset a person — is n't it?" He looked at Sharley, and having recovered her good humor (she never lost it long with "Copperfield"), she answered promptly: "Oh, you got through all right," with a reassuring nod of her head. "You 'd be sure to do the proper thing — from instinct, if nothing else. Did you tell the others in the office?"

Teddy laughed. "I guess I was n't saying very much to anybody just about that time," he remarked. "Seemed to me that I sat at my desk a tremendous long while before I could get the whole matter straight in my mind. You know I 've a little office all to myself. Well, I managed to get into it. I sat down and thought and thought — till positively my brain ached. Tell you what, now, the responsibilities of such a position are simply fearful! You 've got to be as quick as a flash and, with it, sure as old Time. I knew O. T. 'd be watching me like a cat, to say nothing of all the fellows in the office. You see, some of 'em feel pretty sore, having me — so lately come there, and so much younger than most — put over them. I thought of all the things I ought to know that I did n't know, and I put my

feet up on the desk in front of me, and said to myself: 'Theodore Latimer, you 're an ass — a booby — a downright fool. You 'll *never* be able to fill this new position.' Then I thought of you, mums; of what this promotion meant to me — to us all. Why, it 's the opportunity of my life! Just think of holding such a position at my age! It 's simply immense! Well, when I got to that point, I took my feet off the desk; I sat up straight and made a few remarks to myself — in the strictest confidence, of course. 'Theodore, my boy,' I said," Ted straightened up, his tone grew impressive, "'you *are* a kind of an ass, you *are* an ignoramus; but all the same you 're going to stir your stumps and do this work.' So I sailed right in and took over all the new duties. I 've been signing checks the whole afternoon, dictating letters, settling questions on matters that I 've never had anything to do with before. I don't know if I 've done them right or wrong — but I 've done them. There 's one thing, though, that I do know, mother," he slapped his ankle again, "I 've *got* to learn bookkeeping — to understand thoroughly what I 'm doing. It 'll cost something, for I 'll have to be rushed through — and I 'll have to give five evenings out of the week to it — work all day and nights, too. Won't that be tough, though! But I 've got to do it. Then, by and by — when I begin to reap a golden harvest — I 'll take the whole family to Europe! How 's that? Would n't that be a dandy lark, mums?"

"Miss Wan-nie!" came plaintively through the door.

"Oh, botheration! there's that tiresome Katy again!" exclaimed Juanita impatiently.

"I don't wish to hurry you away, but it is certainly very near dinner time," remarked Sharley coldly.

Juanita rose to go, then halted near Teddy. "And are you going to get a tremendous big salary for all this new work?" she asked, to Sharley's great annoyance.

"Well," said Teddy reflectively, "I guess it'll be worth about four or five thousand dollars a year to me — *in* time," he arched his eyebrows comically at her. "Just now I receive, even with the increase of salary, less than one third of that amount — though of course I'll get more by and by. I've got to work up to the five-thousand-dollar mark, you know. Why? Are you about to advise the family not to wait for me to take them abroad?" He smiled merrily at her.

But Juanita had no eyes for the smile; she was doing some mental arithmetic. "Why!" she exclaimed presently, in a tone of astonishment. "And you're going to work so hard — all days and all evenings — for just that little money? You should n't do it," growing quite vehement. "It's a shame!"

"Oh no, it is n't at all," hastily and positively asserted Ted, dropping his ankle and rising to his full height. "Beg pardon for the flat contradiction; but I know what I'm talking about, and

you don't — that 's all. This is a *splendid* opportunity for me. I would n't change places with the multiest millionaire that ever stepped. So please waste no sympathy on me."

"Miss Wannie!" again called the long-suffering Katy, and Juanita walked slowly to the door. Then she turned and came back. "I don't see why you should get mad at what I said," she remarked, frowning at Ted. "And as long as this is such a wonderful thing that 's happened to you — so *aw*fully splendid — why — I congratulate you!"

"Oh, thanks! thanks, most gracious lady!" returned Teddy, bowing very low, with both hands on his heart, and ignoring the little hand that she held out.

Little John eyed him, her frown deepening. "Oh, well — if you don't choose to shake hands — then *don't!*" she said shortly, and, wheeling around, walked quickly away to Katy.

"That 's for having a silver mine in the house!" Ted spoke wrathfully, a little later, as he and Sharley stood for a minute or two alone in the hall before dinner. "She just took the edge off the whole thing!"

"I nudged you not to tell the story before her," remarked Sharley, in an I-told-you-so tone that provoked Ted.

"Do you know, you love to make a secret of everything," he declared crossly. "You just enjoy keeping things all to yourself."

"And you just enjoy telling all you know,"

retorted Sharley. Then she added quickly, regretfully, "Oh, don't let 's quarrel to-day, when this splendid piece of good fortune has come to you, and to us all through you."

"That 's so. Well, 'Barkis is willin','" was the ready answer, and presently Ted threw an arm across her shoulders. "Oh, by the way, what d' you think?" he said; "I 'd almost forgotten it. Grey Anderson made a thousand dollars this morning — clear! In Wall Street — speculating. My own streak of luck nearly put it out of my mind — made that thousand in less than twenty minutes! What d' you think of that? If I had any spare cash, I declare I 'd be tempted to make a venture."

"Speculating?" cried Sharley in alarm. "Oh, Teddy! don't — don't *ever* go in for speculating. You know what father thought of it: for one person to win, some other person *must* lose! Oh, Ted, you surely would n't do such a thing! Anyway, you have n't the money to do it with, thank goodness!" in a tone of relief.

"Oh, you girls and women make me *tired!*" exclaimed Ted indignantly. "A parcel of 'fraid-cats that jump at their own shadow! I guess I know what 's right and what 's wrong as well as you do, Miss Sharley Latimer. If there 's one thing I despise more than another, it 's a girl that thinks she can order the doings of the whole nation!" And jerking his arm from Sharley's shoulders, he marched indignantly upstairs to his room.

CHAPTER IV

"WHY SHOULD N'T WE?"

MISS ACHISON arrived a few days after Juanita had declared her change of decision: she was duly installed as daily governess, and the routine of school begun. Fortunately, besides being a wise, well-bred woman, the new teacher was even-tempered and long-suffering, as there arose constant occasion for the exercise of these qualities in her dealings with the "young person from Anaconda." For Juanita proved herself a very trying pupil. Though naturally bright and intelligent, she hated and shirked the tedium of study, chafed under the restraint of stated hours, and laughed at or defied Miss Achison's authority in the most open and exasperating fashion.

"Think I 'm going to stick in here the whole afternoon and study this stupid old gibberish?" she demanded of Audrey one day, when Miss Achison had requested her to remain in the schoolroom and prepare a French lesson. "Not much! There, I 'm done with you!" She slammed the unoffending grammar down on the table, and rose. "I 'm sick and tired of the house — and the old governess — and *every*thing! I 'm going out for a walk. Come on!"

"But Monsieur Armand will be here at four o'clock, and he'll expect you to have the lesson perfect; you know this is the third time for that poor, unfortunate exercise," reminded Audrey. "Just go at it in earnest, Juan, and you'll very quickly get it into your head. It must be awfully discouraging to monsieur to have imperfect lessons."

"Discouraging!" cried Juanita indignantly. "Why, that's what he's paid for, is n't it? And so is Miss Achison; it's her business to teach us; and to be polite to us, too. She's paid for it — that's what she's here for. And yet you act to 'em both as if they were doing us the greatest favor in the world to condescend to take my — our — money, standing back for her to enter the room first, and all that, making yourself a regular door mat for her. Such rubbish! You need n't think I'm going to do that, for I *never* will!"

"W-h-y, *Juanie!* I'm astonished!" exclaimed Audrey; and something in her voice, in the expression of her wide-open blue eyes, brought a slight sense of shame to Juanita. Then Audrey leaned forward, the color flushing her face rosy red. "Look here, Juan," she said earnestly, "Miss Achison is a lady by birth and education — mother knows exactly who she is; she has about sixteen million times more knowledge and wisdom and sense than either you or I have; she's a good deal older than we are; and as long as she is our teacher she is in authority over us. So why should n't I — both of us — step aside and let her go out

of the room, or come into it, before us? Simply because she 's earning her living? She is just as much entitled to our politeness as if she were the richest lady in the land — that 's *my* opinion. If she gets our money, we get her knowledge in exchange, and which do you suppose is most worth having? All right for you, Juanie," with a sudden unexpected change of tone; "now I know how you 'll treat me when *I* get to be a teacher. Because — because I 'll be earning my living — being paid money for what I do — you will look down on me." Audrey's voice grew quite pathetic. "You 'll not want to be my friend any longer. Well, I 'm glad I know in time; I shan't trouble you." She turned her back on her companion, and began aimlessly gathering up the books on the schoolroom table.

"You great, foolish, *silly*, little goose!" cried Juanita. Flying at Audrey, she threw her arms around her, and gave her a vigorous hug. "Do you suppose I 'd ever look down on you? *No!* not if you swept the streets — not if you were a rag-picker — and smoked a clay pipe, like old Pedro's wife — not if — oh, no matter *what* you did! Don't you know that? Don't you believe me?" turning her laughing face up to the gaze of the other girl. "*Do* you believe me?" giving Audrey a little shake.

Audrey had to smile at her vehemence. "Yes, I believe you," she said warmly. "And, Juan, when you get impatient and feel like being ru— disagreeable — to Miss Achison, just think how

you 'd like some girl to do that sort of thing to me, by and by, when I 'm teaching; will you?"

"I 'll not worry my brain over that idea, for you are not going to be any old slave of a teacher," declared Little John, evading the question, and rubbing her smooth dark cheek against Audrey's fair one. "I won't let you be. You are to come and live with me — daddy 's going to build me a splendid big house when I 'm through school; and you and I 'll live there always, and just have the most beautiful times. Won't that be perfectly splendid?"

"Oh, I 'd love to come and visit you — I 'd just *love* to; but I could n't give up my work, you know!" exclaimed Audrey. "And, indeed, Juan, you need n't think that I 'm going to be any slave. I know I shall enjoy teaching — unless, of course," with a quizzical glance at Juanita, "some girl treats me badly — as you do Miss Achison sometimes! So you need n't pity me one bit."

"If you are n't all of you the funniest family!" remarked Juanita in a tone of disgust. "There 's Teddy — just working like a dog — h'm! a good deal harder than Gag has ever worked — all day long, and then off to that horrid bookkeeping every night of his life 'cept Saturdays, — simply slaving, — and for such a mean little salary. And he gets raving mad if a person even says one word against it. I know daddy 'd give him a splendid place out West — in the mine, or on the ranch, or somewhere; and pay him *lots* more than he gets here. But, no, the obstinate creature would n't go. Oh *no!*

— don't ever mention such a thing!" her chin went up, the corners of her mouth down; "he 's insulted if you simply propose it. And you 're another one, Miss Audrey. You would n't go and have a good time for anything in the world! No, *sir!*" she slapped her hands sharply together. "Work — work — is what I love — what I adore! Such rubbish! It just makes me furious to hear you people talk — as if work were the one great thing in life, and money nothing."

"Oh, but, Juanie, none of us ever said that — that money was nothing," Audrey protested. "That would be silly to say, for we know that it can be, in a way, a great power — one can do so much good in the world with it. I only wish we had a little more of it! But as long as we have n't any money, is n't it a fortunate thing that some of us *can* work and are willing to, instead of doing it grudgingly? Goodness! if you only knew how glad I am that I shall be able to work at languages — something I like! Now you get along so well with arithmetic, algebra, and all those horrid studies — I think I should go insane if I ever had to teach mathematics! Sharley loves to keep house — it would be almost the greatest trial in the world to me; I cannot remember the million or two things that should be done day after day. But I don't feel that way with languages. I love Latin and French and German, and I do think," the color deepening in her cheeks, "that I 'll be able to teach them well by and by. I shall try, anyway. And, Juan, let me begin with you, will you? Let 's

see if I can help you get this lesson. Now did n't you give up Miss Gray's school and have Miss Achison to please us? Ah, let me do this little thing for you. Come on, here 's your book; ah, come!" with such pleading eyes that Juanita had to yield.

"Well," she said, rather ungraciously it must be confessed, "I 'll give it just fifteen minutes — not one second more. I 'm not so stuck on French as to stay in this old room all the afternoon for it."

Audrey really possessed the power of imparting knowledge, and the lesson was progressing finely when Kittredge put his head inside the schoolroom door, the usual strap of books hanging over his shoulder. "Oh, say! you 're missing it!" he informed them. "Dobson's Circus has been parading down Broadway for over an hour — lions, tigers, bears, elephants, gorillas, monkeys, wild Indians, tattooed South Sea Islanders, galore! with a clown or two, and half a dozen entrancing fairy princesses on mustangs waltzing in and out of the procession to the lively tune of 'Johnnie, get your gun, get your gun, get your gun!' Tell you, now, that was the finest sight you ever laid eyes on! Grand! Simply immense!" His own eyes were sparkling, and he piled up his adjectives at sight of Juanita's eager face.

"Oh, it is n't over? Can't we go now — right away?" she asked, springing up. "I *love* a circus! Come on, Audrey, do let 's go at once. Why did n't you tell us before?" turning on Kittredge.

"Could n't possibly tear myself away — too fas-

cinating," replied Kit; then shaking his head mournfully: "Sorry — *aw*fully sorry — I could 'most weep for your disappointment; but you are — too late! Nary a procesh will you see now. 'T is over — gone like a dream — melted away, so to speak. I tell you," as Juanita made a motion of disbelief, "I watched till every sign of 'em had vanished, even to the tiniest tip of the elephant's massive tail. No use your going now; you would n't see a thing. And I 'm about starved! Aud, can't you find a fellow something to eat? Sharley 's shut up in mums's room — and Ann gives such mean, skimpy helps. Hurry up, do, or I 'll fall on you two girls and gobble you up. That 's right!" as Audrey rose, and began putting away her book, preparatory to following out his request.

"I do think you 're the meanest boy, to come and tell us about that procession after 't was all over," Juanita told Kit, as they were all going down the stairs together. "You must have known we 'd want to see it."

"There was one critter there I 'm sure you 'd have had a fellow feeling for, and gone miles to see," Kit answered her, rapidly putting two or three steps between them. "It was a — great — lovely — *beau*tiful — sarpint! A relative of yours — an anaconda!"

This time Little John understood the allusion perfectly, and with a wrathful exclamation she darted after her tormentor.

But Kit was too quick for her; sliding himself

over the banister, he dropped lightly to the hall below and scampered off, chanting, —

> "'T is the voice of the lobster; I heard *her* declare,
> 'You 've baked me too brown; I must sugar my hair!'"

while the exasperated Juanita turned into her own room to air her grievances to Katy Karney.

Katy was kneeling beside an open willow dress-case, gazing down at the contents. "Oi was just afther comin' to tell yez the thrunk 'd arrived," she said. "Is it lookin' at the gowns ye 'd be?"

But Little John was too full of her annoyance to pay any attention to the remark. She had not lived nearly a month in the house with Kittredge without discovering that a practical joke was as the breath of life to that young man; he and she had had several skirmishes, and, though not for worlds would she have confessed to it, Juanie had a little lurking dread of his saucy tongue. "I think he is perfectly horrid — *horrid!*" she declared, with a good deal of energy. Ignoring Katy's offer of a chair, she took up a position on the foot-rail of her bed, where she sat balancing herself, and in constant danger of rolling over backward. "And conceited! He 's just trying the whole time to show off all he knows — he thinks he 's so awfully smart! Anyway," she grumbled on, in a highly disgusted tone, "they 're the stupidest set — the whole lot of them. A person can't have one bit of fun. You must n't race upstairs — oh no, that is n't ladylike; you must sneak up as if you were afraid somebody 'd

hear you. You must n't laugh out loud; you must n't play around the parlor — oh, the drawing-room," pulling down the corners of her mouth; "you must n't romp with Gag; you must n't have a speck of amusement! You need n't be looking at me that way, Katy Karney — I guess I know what I 'm talking about. And as for Mrs. Latimer — why, you must n't even *breathe* when you 're near *her* — for fear you should make her nervous! The idea of being afraid of Agagio, and not letting him put a nose into her sitting-room! Why, he would n't hurt a fly — well, I don't mean that exactly, for he just loves to snap flies — but he would n't ever think of hurting *her*. And if you happen to shut a door hard, she jumps as if you 'd almost shot her. And the way she looks at you makes you feel 's if you had committed a crime."

"Now, shore ye 'd be afther loikin' the swate little laidy, Miss Wannie!" exclaimed Katy warmly. She had commenced taking the dresses out of the trunk and hanging them in the closet. "She 's that shut in day afther day, an' bearin' the pain an' sickness loike a rale angil."

"Did I say I did n't like her? *did* I?" demanded Juanita with such energy that she nearly lost her balance. "You just stop putting words into my mouth. But she need n't be so fussy, need she? She 's one, Teddy is another," beginning to count off the family on her fingers, varied by a desperate outfling of her arms, every few minutes, to sustain her equilibrium. "He 's nice —

though I think he could be pretty cranky if things did n't go to suit him. Still I like him — he speaks right out, and does n't make a mystery over everything. But that stuck-up, disagreeable Sharley does n't. I think she actually *hates* to have him tell the least thing where I can hear it. As if I cared! I don't want to know their old secrets. O-u-ch!" swaying wildly with outstretched arms.

"It 's the chere you 'd oughter be settin' on, 'n' not that sthring av a rail," remonstrated Katy.

"Oh, don't bother me!" was the ungrateful return. Then, resuming the thread of her grumble, "I don't see why Mrs. Latimer lets that domineering Sharley order the whole family as if she owned them. I don't like her one atom; and you need n't think you 'll get me to say anything else. The way she bosses Audrey! You bet she won't try it on me — I would n't stand it. And d' you suppose I 'll keep on going to bed every night at nine o'clock — as if I were two years old? Not much! I've told dad five or six times since I came that he 's just got to write and tell 'em here that I 'm to go to bed when I choose, and not before. I can't understand why he does n't do it. Well," ignoring Katy's grunt of disapproval, and resuming her count, "that makes three. The others don't amount to much. Jamie and Dorrie are cute little youngsters, but they 're spoiled as can be; nobody could deny that," with a shrewd nod at her nurse. "Rach is a soft little idiot; but Audrey 's the girl — she 's worth the whole crowd of 'em. She 's a *dear!* Oh — oh! why

did n't I think of it before!" she exclaimed in a tone of sudden intense annoyance. "I found out something the other day about that Kittredge that 'll tease him most beautifully! He hates to to be called Kitty — and that 's just what I 'll call him every chance I get. I want to be called John, and they won't do it; he hates to be called Kitty, and I will do that — now! Oh, I 'll tease my gentleman! Kitty! kitty! kitty! nice little pussy cat!" She snapped her fingers at an imaginary cat, and losing her balance rolled over backward on to the bed.

But before Katy could reach her she was on her feet, and laughing merrily. "Ho! thought I was hurt, did n't you? Well, I 'm not," she said; then suddenly her eyes fell on the open trunk, and she darted over to it, exclaiming, "Oh, there 's my pink gown! I want Audrey to see it — oh, I want her to see them all. Take all the things out of the closet, Katy; I want to show 'em to Audrey."

"But, Miss Wannie, they 're all hung up, barrin' wan or two," demurred Katy. "An' " —

"I don't care if they are," interrupted Juanita imperiously. "I want 'em out. You might 've known I 'd want Audrey to see them. Take them every one out this very minute!" She stamped her foot to emphasize the order. "And spread the dresses out on the bed so they 'll show what they are. And you need n't look glum over it, either."

Then she flew to the head of the stairs and called loudly, "Audrey! Audrey Lati*mer!* Au*drey!* Come — up — here! And — bring — Aga-

gio! Gag! Gag! here, Gag!" A series of deep, delighted barks sounded from somewhere in the lower regions, a door slammed, and the bull terrier came tearing up the steps as fast as his legs could carry him, when he reached his mistress leaping about her with many demonstrations of joy. Audrey was close behind him. "Oh, Juan, do quiet him!" she gasped out, panting from her rapid run. "The noise sounds perfectly dreadful downstairs, and mother is feeling so miserable to-day!"

Little John had greeted the dog with a merry shout; now she peremptorily bade him, "Be still, sir! Stop your noise! Do you hear me, Gag!" and stooping hastily muzzled Agagio with her two strong little hands, a proceeding which would have been dangerous for any one else to have attempted. "Oh, I did n't know your mother was worse," she said quickly, for her apologetically, when Sharley's voice, cold and crisp, came from the hall below: "Audrey, are *you* helping to make that dreadful noise? Juanita, I must ask you to keep your dog quiet," she called.

Juanita instantly loosed her hold of Agagio. "Go it, Gag! Have a romp! Go it, old boy!" she cried in a ringing voice that easily reached Sharley's ears, and clapping her hands to encourage the excited dog to still further lengths.

"Oh, Juanie! Juanie! hush!" exclaimed Audrey. But with a gay laugh and a shrill call of "Gag! here Gag!" Juanita pulled her hastily, followed by the leaping dog, into the bedroom, slamming the door to noisily behind them.

"Now don't you scold, miss," she coaxed, with a merry uplifted finger; then, pointing to the mass of color laid out on the bed, "I wanted you to see my gowns; are n't they *sweet?*" Gagio immediately bounded on the bed, sniffing riotously at the finery, from whence Katy speedily ejected him.

"See; are n't they pretty?" asked Juanita. "Here's a pink one; I think it's too sweet for anything! And that red silk — and the blue. And I just *love* that white one; is n't it a dear? And this pale corn-color, and that green — are n't they simply dreams? Don't you like 'em all?" Her voice was eager, her eyes sparkling, as she pointed out the beauties of her gowns; ending — "to try the effect" — by holding each one up before Audrey, who with girlish enjoyment readily submitted.

"Yes," declared Little John, with a sigh of satisfaction, "they're all becoming to you, every one, especially this blue. You see, you're fair, not," regretfully, "black like me. Now," in high good humor, "I'll show you my jewelry; you know I told you I would some day." She threw the gowns in a careless heap over the foot-rail. "Katy, where's my box? I keep all the cases in a big tin box," this in an aside for Audrey's benefit. "Oh, do hurry, Katy; you're moving just like a snail — you need n't say a word — you know very well you are crawling. Now, Audrey, are n't these worth looking at?" Tearing open the cases, she threw their contents in a glittering little heap in the middle of the bed. "Here, Aud, sit here;

push those gowns aside; Katy 'll take 'em away some time between now 'n' the next hundred years. Sit here," an invitation which Audrey accepted, and Agagio as well, the latter poking his nose among the jewels, and leaving the marks of his dusty feet all over the clean white counterpane. Katy did say, "Down wid ye, ye imperdent spalpeen!" But Gag treated the remark with supreme indifference, and the girls were too much occupied to notice him.

"Oh, they are beautiful — *beau*tiful!" exclaimed Audrey in delight. "And such a lot! Are they *all* yours?"

"All — every one — my very own!" answered Juanita, with a pleased, gleeful laugh, at the other girl's frank admiration. "Dad gave 'em all to me — this ring — is n't it splendid? — when I had tonsilitis, for taking some horrid old medicine. And this pin — see the size of the stones! there was n't anybody at the hotel had bigger diamonds than mine — well, he gave me this pin for promising I would n't ride Terror, one of the colts on the ranch. Oh, he *was* a darling, that colt!" She threw down the diamond pin and clasped her hands ecstatically. "The way he used to tear around that corral! Then down he 'd go on his back, and just roll, with his four feet in the air. I 'm sure I could 've ridden him; you know all you 'd have to do 'd be to jump off quickly when you saw he was going down. But daddy was afraid I 'd get killed. He coaxed and coaxed me to give it up, and when I did he gave me this pin as a surprise.

All these others I got on birthdays and — oh," shrugging her shoulders, "odd times. Yes, that's a pretty ruby. Did you know that sometimes rubies cost more than diamonds? Don't you swallow that ring, Gag. Drop it! drop it!"

"Mother has a ruby — a beauty," remarked Audrey, while her companion was rescuing her property from the terrier. "It is in her engagement ring from father."

"H'm!" cried Little John, her chin in the air. "I could've had the biggest ruby in the whole country if I'd chosen to take it. 'T was this way," she dropped her voice to a confidential undertone. "You've heard me talk of Pedro, the old man that taught me to dance the bolero and sing those Spanish songs? He taught me to ride, too. Well, he isn't very clean. In fact, I might's well own up to it, he's awfully dirty-looking, and he's forever getting into fights with the other men on the ranch. But he has got the most wonderful way with animals, particularly horses. No matter how wild they are, he can break them in to be as gentle as a lamb. Tell you! the ranch owners round pay him good money to train their horses, for nobody can do it as he does. It's a secret, a great secret, the way he does it, and *I'm* the *only one* he's ever told the secret to" (up went her head proudly); "and of course I wouldn't tell it, not for the whole wide world! Well, a ranch owner — Don Miguel, though Pedro says he's no more a don than Gagio is — wanted Pedro to come train some of his colts, and Pedro wouldn't go, — he can't

bear Don Miguel, — no matter how much money he offered. Well, somebody must 've told that horrid man — he 's got jet-black hair that just looks as if it had been soaked in oil! ugh!" (she threw out her hands with a gesture of utter disgust that appealed to Audrey) — "must 've told him that I knew how Pedro did it. What does he do but come and ask me to tell him *Pedro's* secret! He brought a locket with him, and set right in the middle of it, sticking away out, was the biggest — the very *big*gest ruby you could imagine. Oh, it was a beauty! It flashed and sparkled in the light better than a diamond — turned black and purple and the most gorgeous red as he kept moving it about. I could n't take my eyes off it! He said" — the girls' heads were very close together now — "he said, 'I will give you this splendid ruby, signorita, — it is the largest and most valuable in the country, — if you will tell me Pedro's secret, how he tames wild horses and colts.'"

"And what did you say?" asked Audrey breathlessly.

"Say?" Little John sprang to her feet, her eyes flashing; her voice rang out, startling Katy Karney. "I just pointed to the door," out went her hand, and a little brown rigid index finger. "'Don Miguel,' I said, — if I 'd been a man I 'd have kicked him off that piazza quicker 'n a wink, — 'Don Miguel,' I said, 'there 's the door — get out of this house quick, or I 'll set the dogs on you!' Then I called — loud 'Barney! Rocks! Vixen! Here, boys!' I knew they were at the

back of the house and could n't hear me, but he did n't know that, and if you had seen him jump on his pony and tear down the road at full speed! It was too funny! I laughed till I nearly cried!" She was laughing heartily now, and Audrey with her. "So that 's the way I lost the biggest ruby in the country," she said, dropping down again on the edge of the bed.

"Now which of my gowns do you like best?" she asked, after they had looked over all the jewelry, and Audrey had "tried on" the various rings, pins, and bangles that took her fancy.

"I think they are all lovely, especially the blue," said Audrey promptly.

"And which of the rings?" questioned Juanie eagerly.

"Oh, I don't know; it 's hard to decide where all are so beautiful," returned the unsuspecting Audrey; "but, perhaps," reflectively, "I like that one with the sapphires best."

With a swift, unexpected movement, Little John snatched up the blue gown, and threw it into Audrey's lap, and, catching hold of her hand, tried to push the ring on her finger. "They are yours — they 're for you!" she cried delightedly. "They 're a present from me."

But with the color dyeing her face scarlet Audrey pushed Juanita away, and struggled to her feet. "Oh no — no!" she exclaimed in great embarrassment. "I could n't take them! I could n't think of such a thing! Oh, really, I cannot take them!"

"Oh, but you can — you must!" persisted Juanita enthusiastically, still trying to force the ring on Audrey's finger, while Katy stood looking on, her eyes half closed, and the usual complacent smile on her lips. "The things are mine, and I can give 'em away to anybody I choose, so you need n't think dad 'll mind. I can get lots more if I want. I 've only worn the gown once, — out in Anaconda,— so nobody 'd know it here 'cept Katy, and she 'd never tell."

"Dade, thin, it 'll never pass me taath," murmured Katy reassuringly.

"And it 'll be awfully becoming to you," urged Juanie. "Then you can wear it and the ring to the next party we go to — you and I — eh?"

"But I never go to parties," declared Audrey bluntly. "And mother would n't let me wear a diamond ring now; she says I 'm too young for that yet." Then she remembered Little John's bejeweled fingers, and finished lamely with, "But — eh — well — of course — everybody does n't — eh — feel that way about it."

But only the first part of the sentence had caught Juanita's attention, to the exclusion of the rest. "*Never* go to parties!" she echoed in blank dismay. "Goodness me! Then what 's the use of my having all these clothes? Why, at the hotel we had a hop every week, and a ball once a month. I used to have elegant times! I love to dance! I *love* it! And now I suppose I 'll never get a chance to enjoy myself one bit." There came a little quiver into her voice. "It 'll be study, study,

*stu*dy!" — she put her chin up, and pulled down the corners of her grave little red mouth — "and work, work, work! — the whole livelong time. I just wish I 'd stayed in Anaconda! 'T was good enough for me — and a person could have some fun there!" She dashed the blue gown down on the bed and flung the ring after it.

"Oh, we dance sometimes," Audrey hastened to tell her, "in the drawing-room, evenings, when mother feels well enough to have us do it. Roger Burton always comes, and the Anderson girls and Grey, and we have lots of fun! But we don't dress up in gowns like these, for it is n't a regular party nor a ball. We are n't out yet, you know, Juan, and schoolgirls don't go to balls — they 're never asked. It 's like — like — the diamonds; we 'll have them when we get older. See?"

"No, I *don't* 'see,'" replied Juanita shortly. "I think it 's all rubbish — and very silly! Anaconda way is a thousand million times nicer. I can't see that it 's any more harm to dance when you 're young than when you 're old. This is the dullest hole I ever was in. I just wish I was home again — that 's all!" She threw herself into a chair, and, hastily brushing a tear off her face with the back of her hand, sat frowning and beating the floor with an angry foot.

Audrey looked wistfully at her, then she went over and knelt down by the chair and laid a loving arm across Little John 's lap. "Juanie dear, I thank you ever and *ever* so much for wishing to give me that lovely gown and ring," she said ear-

nestly. "You are a dear, generous girl! I can't take them — I know mother would n't like me to — but I 'll never forget that you wanted me to have them. It was sweet of you. I love you for it just as much as if I had taken them. You dear!" She put up her lips, and after a slight hesitation, Juanita bent forward and kissed her.

"Is it to be like this — dull and poky — *all* the time?" she asked anxiously. "Just lessons, and going to bed at nine o 'clock every evening? Could n't we go to the circus or the theatre, or have *some* fun?"

"Well," Audrey hesitated, "you see, on account of mother's being so delicate Sharley does n't like to leave her; and you and I could n't go alone — I mean without an older person than Teddy. We 've never gone to the theatre but once in a great while. You know," her eyes meeting Juanie's black ones honestly, "it costs money to go to places of amusement; we could n't indulge in it very often. I don't think we any of us miss it," she added; "we love to be at home. But perhaps Sharley could arrange for it, if she knew you wanted so much to go."

"Oh, Sharley!" cried Juanita scornfully. "Much she 'd arrange! I 'm just sick of being at home," she went on; "and as for the expense," eagerly, "I 've got lots of money. Dad gave me a big roll of bills when I left Anaconda, and I 've scarcely spent a cent; it 's just lying in that bureau drawer. I could buy tickets for something or other for the whole family. I 'd love to! Could n't we go to the circus? — this evening?"

"Oh, we could n't go in the evening — you and I; mother would n't let us do that, I know; but — perhaps we might to some matinée," Audrey said, though her tone was dubious, "on a Saturday — on account of no school, you know. But we might ask Sharley and see what she thinks about it."

"Audrey!" called Jamie, through the keyhole, "Sharley says to come right down. She wants you."

"Very well, tell her I 'm coming," hastily responded Audrey, rising to her feet with a look of relief. "Don't fret, Juanie dear," she said kindly. "I know that mother and Sharley will try to give you all the pleasure they can. We do want you to be happy with us."

As the door closed behind her Little John sprang up, determination in every line of her small face. "Katy, we 're going to the circus, and we 're going to-night!" she declared. "If these stupid old Latimers don't choose to go they can stay away — but I and you are *going!*"

"But Miss Wannie, darlint," began Katy in remonstrance, though her small eyes were sparkling at the prospect of the pleasure.

"If you say a *word* against it — I go alone!" cried Juanita, turning fiercely on her. "Get my hat and coat, and put on your own. We 'll go right out and buy the tickets; perhaps we can get a box. Why should n't we have some fun? Is it a crime? Why should n't we, I 'd just like to know? Now hurry and come on — *do!*"

CHAPTER V

A BATTLE ROYAL

"WHERE is Juanita? She has n't been in to see me to-day," remarked Mrs. Latimer, about an hour or two after Little John and Katy had stolen unnoticed from the house. "I miss her little face. With all her faults, the child has some most winning ways. I am growing very fond of her."

Mrs. Latimer had had a "bad day;" she looked almost as white as the pillows on which she lay, but a faint smile stirred her lips as she glanced at her children gathered in what was always designated in the family as "mother's sitting-room," though curtained off in the alcove stood the bed which she and Sharley shared together. The little mother dearly loved this hour of the day — before dinner and after Ted's return from business — when, as she had told Juanita, her boys and girls came to her and told her their joys and trials. "Joys may be told this afternoon, but *not* a trial," Sharley had warned each one; "mother's not able to stand anything disagreeable to-day." So all were on their best behavior.

Jamie was hunched up at the foot of the lounge, one little hand gently stroking his mother's instep, and Dorrie sat close to her on a hassock, snug-

gling her blond head against "mums's" shoulder. Sharley and, for a wonder, Audrey were sewing by the lamp; Kit and Rachel had squeezed into one big armchair, and were in a perpetual state of chuckles and giggles, and Teddy, in his favorite attitude, caressing his ankle, had been giving an animated account of his day's doings.

"Perhaps Juanie's in her room; I left her there this afternoon," Audrey said, putting down her work to talk. "And you're right, mother, she *has* winning ways; she is just as generous as she can be. Think what she wanted me to do!" And then she gave them the story of the blue gown and the ring which Juanita had tried to press upon her. All listened with interest, and varied were the comments it excited.

"H'm! wish she'd offered that ring to this child. *I'd* not've refused it," declared Kit. "Why — I'd have sold it, you goose!" this last to Rach, who had ventured a query; "what else d' you think? — worn it on my thumb? I would've sold it, and then invested in a watch and a wheel and a canoe. High jinks!" He hugged his knees in an ecstasy at the bare thought, and nearly squeezed Rach out of the chair.

"Perhaps she means well, but she is certainly very uncouth and dictatorial. She hates to be corrected," remarked Sharley in an undertone to Ted, but with decision, thinking of the afternoon's performance with Agagio.

"Why, I think she's pretty nice — take her altogether," observed Copperfield in a fatherly,

judicial sort of way. "Of course, she's spoiled, quick tempered, and loves to have her own sweet will; but should n't some allowance be made for all that when you remember the hotel business — and no mother? Seems to me so. And anyway," arching his eyebrows at his sister, "we knew full well what we were undertaking; we did n't go it blindly. Mrs. Brydges called her a young savage — not an angel. *I* think we've something to be thankful for that she does n't come down to breakfast in the feather head-gear we talked about, nor flourish the tomahawk — eh?"

Sharley colored a little; though she also laughed, she felt the rebuke in Ted's words. "Oh, I suppose she might be a good deal worse," she admitted honestly, "and of course I am very glad to have her here — it's a *great* help. But," leaning forward confidentially, "she is *aw*fully hard to manage, Ted — she is so unreasonable. She lords it over that unfortunate Katy — speaks to and orders her about as if she were a slave. Then, when she finds Katy's feelings are hurt, she gives her all sorts of expensive, most unsuitable presents — to salve the wounded spirit! Now that I know them both, I am pretty sure that's where the French bonnet and sealskin coat in which she made her first appearance here came from, as well as the absurd 'rigs' Katy is so constantly coming out in. And I'm confident Juanita does n't like me. She is fond of Audrey, but she does n't like me, though I have tried and do try to be friendly with her — knowing how much her being here

means to us. She resents my authority, and you know that is not good for the other children to see; and she keeps running to mother to settle questions that she should n't be bothered with."

"Try a new tack," suggested Ted. "Why not have a talk with the refractory young person? Speak pleasantly and — and kindly, of course; and explain that you 're mums's right bower, and sort of own us all." Ted's eyes were twinkling. "And then induce her to sign some bond or other to keep the peace. I 'm positive that if you went about it in the right way you could win her over — make her mild as a lamb, and get her to do just what you want. Bet you, I could do it!"

"Oh, very likely you could — you 're such a wonderfully fascinating and convincing person!" retorted Sharley; then, with growing sarcasm: "Suppose you begin at once. Juanita is devoted to slang; you *never* use it; begin by breaking her of that bad habit. Of course I understand that will be very easy," with an airy wave of her hand, "but just show us that you can do it."

Ted threw back his head with a laugh of thorough enjoyment. "You hit the nail on the head then, old girl," he said. "That remark touched a weak spot; but, all the same, I 'll take up the commission. I 'll undertake to reform the slangy young Anaconda. See if I don't," with a confident nod of his head.

"I wish you joy of your bargain," began Sharley, the corners of her lips twitching with amusement.

"Oh yes," broke in Ted, "I know the quality of your congratulations, —

> "'I weep for you,' the Walrus said,
> 'I deeply sympathize' —

Hullo! where to?" breaking off abruptly as Audrey passed by his chair.

"To find Juanie; mother wants her with us."

"Oh yes," remarked Mrs. Latimer, "the poor child must be lonely. I want her to be with us as much as possible, and feel herself quite one of the family. Audrey, tell Juanita to come right down."

"Who 's that talking about me? Here I am," cried Little John's voice from the doorway, and she came forward to the light with her usual eager rush. She wore her coat and hat. She had just the minute before got in. There was a dash of color in her cheeks, her eyes were sparkling, and in her hands she held a great bunch of long-stemmed American Beauties, which filled the room with their delightful perfume. Going swiftly to Mrs. Latimer's side, Juanie laid the roses on her lap. "They 're for you," she said, smiling.

"For me! Oh, how beautiful they are!" exclaimed the little mother, with delight. "You are a dear child to have thought of me!" She drew the girl down and kissed her warmly.

"Why, Juanita! have you been out as late as this, and alone?" asked Sharley in surprise. And dropping the flower he had lifted to his nose, Teddy looked up quickly, the same question in his eyes.

"Katy was with me. I'd like to know what harm there was?" answered Juanie, taking offense at the tone, and tossing her head.

"But you knew it was against rules!" reproachfully exclaimed Sharley, "and Katy has no more knowledge of the city than you have."

"You should n't go out like this, so late and alone. Now really, you should n't," remonstrated Copperfield persuasively, remembering his remarks to Sharley a little while before.

"No, in*deed* you should n't," chimed in Kittredge. He was well to the front now, and with a fine pretense of horror. "Just fancy if a 'ba'-ar' had met such a choice morsel as you, you 'd have been eaten quite up! Or if the 'tiger from Riger' had put in an appearance — horrible! In about two shakes 't would have been '*Juanita* inside, and the *smile* on the face of the tiger!' Think of our feelings! We would n't even have had a lock of your hair as a souvenir! The mere thought of such a catastrophe makes me weep. Boo—hoo!" He mopped his eyes violently, then made an elaborate show of wringing out his handkerchief, "to get a dry spot for more weeps."

"You are a perfectly horrid, *rude* thing!" declared Juanita angrily, throwing out her hand at him; and though his own shoulders were shaking with silent laughter, Ted caught Kittredge by the collar, and, escorting him rapidly to the door of the sitting-room, put him out.

"I don't see anything to make such a fuss about," continued Little John defiantly, her chin

well in the air. "Guess I 've got a tongue in my head; I could ask the way of somebody, if we got lost. And as for going alone, why, in Anaconda I just went out as *I* pleased, day or evening, with Katy or without her, and nothing 's happened to me *yet*."

"But New York is not Anaconda," Sharley reminded her firmly. "And you know that mother does not allow Audrey and you to be out after dark, even with Katy Karney" (Sharley had no opinion of Katy as a chaperon) "unless I am with you. And you told no one that you were going" —

"Am I obliged to come and ask your grand permission before I can put my nose out of doors?" broke in Juanita, raising her voice angrily. "Well, I just *won't!* I 'll go and come as I please. And" —

"Oh, Juan! hush, for mother's sake!" urged Audrey in a hurried whisper, laying a restraining hand on the angry girl's arm. "She is n't well to-day, you know."

Sharley started and caught her breath; a pang of remorse went through her heart. "Oh, I forgot — I forgot!" she exclaimed in deep contrition. "I warned the others to be careful of mother, and then *I* forgot her!" Turning to Juanita, she added in an undertone quickly, almost humbly, "Never mind, Juanita, don't say any more just now, *please* don't!"

But her warning came too late. Mrs. Latimer had heard the discussion, and was sitting up on her

lounge, wide eyed and apprehensive. "Come here, Juanita, my dear," she called. "Move, Dorrie, and let her sit beside me." Then taking the girl's hand in her own nervous clasp, she said earnestly, "Dearie, it was *very* sweet of you to get me these beautiful roses. I know that was what led you into going out so late and without telling any one that you were going."

Little John thought of the circus tickets stuck inside her glove, and had the grace to blush. "I'll tell her presently, when she gets through talking," she determined, "and ask 'em all to go with me to-night."

"I appreciate your kindness; the flowers are lovely! Dear, comforting things!" went on Mrs. Latimer, touching the velvety petals caressingly. "But I don't like you to be out alone so late in the evening. I would n't like Audrey to do that, and you know, my dear," the tone was persuasive, as was the pressure of the hot, fluttering fingers on Juanita's hand, "I look upon you as one — of my daughters — so you must not — expect to do what — Audrey may not. You — understand?" Her breath was coming in short, labored gasps; her lips turned white; and Sharley, who had been standing near anxiously watching, came quickly forward.

"Mother, dearest, you are *so* tired! had n't you better lie down?" she urged; adding, in a low, hurried voice to Juanita, "Please go, now. And tell Teddy — all the others except Audrey — to go, too. She is very tired."

Mrs. Latimer caught the last word. "Yes — I am — so tired!" she said faintly, allowing herself to be laid back on the pillows. And Juanita was only too glad to escape from the room. "I did n't promise — I did n't promise," she congratulated herself. "And, anyway, she said 'alone.' I would n't be alone so long as Katy was with me."

She was halfway up to her room, carrying with her an uncomfortable and most unusual feeling of depression, when a noise in the hall below attracted her attention, and she paused and looked over the banister.

"Now, Dorrie, you are going to behave yourself like a good little girl, and go upstairs with Rach without any fuss," Teddy was saying in a tone which was a funny mixture of wheedle and command. "You know mother is n't feeling well, so you must make no noise. To-morrow you can go in again and see her."

"No—*o-o!*" wailed Dorothy. "I 'ants to go in *now* — an' kiss her good-night. An' I 'ants Lally to give me my dinner. Lal-*lee!*" She broke away from Rachel's detaining hand and raced to her mother's door, where Ted caught her, barely in time to arrest the little fists from pounding on the door, and the small, shrill voice from penetrating through it.

"Lal-l—" began Dorrie in the sharp key of outraged anguish; but Ted's hand laid lightly over her lips smothered the remaining syllables, and, snatching the little figure into his arms, he ran upstairs, closely followed by Jamie and Rach.

"Oh!" Teddy said in a tone of relief as he met Juanita, taking his hand off his little sister's mouth. "Here 's Little John, Dorrie; she 'll give you your dinner. Won't that be jolly? — you 'll do it?" he asked in a hurried, imploring aside. "Sharley and Audrey are with mother; and she 'll tell you a *beau*tiful story, too, Dorrie. Oh, it 'll be thrilling — about the horses — and the colts — *and* the dogs — and the — eh — what," in another hurried aside, this time with a mischievous smile, "*what* other animals grow on that ranch of yours?"

Juanita had at first looked very much inclined to refuse the request; but there was no resisting Copperfield's appealing eyes, nor his smile. "All right, Dorrie, I 'll give you and Jamie your dinner," she said, but her tone was not enthusiastic. "Katy 'll help us, and then while you 're eating, I 'll tell you about Terror and the ugly little yellow dog that used to sleep in his stall and was n't one scrap afraid of the colt. Would n't you like to hear that? I thought so. Come on, then; you too, Jamie, and we 'll go up to Katy, first, to wash your faces and hands." Taking Dorrie's hand, with a little nod in answer to Ted's earnest thanks, she led the way to her room, followed by Rachel and Jamie.

"Oh, we 're going," she said to Katy a little later, when the children's dinner was over, and Audrey had come up and taken them away; "and we 're going alone — me and you. No, Katy," in rather a despondent tone, "I did n't ask any of

'em — I did n't say a word, because Mrs. Latimer was so sick, and — and — well, I just *felt* they 'd none of them care to go. I s'pose a circus is n't grand enough for such 'quality' as they are. Well," throwing up her head with a return of spirit, "it 's good enough for me. You and I 'll have to spread out and fill the box." She said not a word of Mrs. Latimer's objection to her being out that afternoon, and turned angrily on Katy when she demurred at going "widout lave." "You just shut up, Katy Karney!" she informed her. "I 've bought the tickets, and I 'm *going*. As I have told you before, if you don't choose to come, stay away. I can go alone. *I 'm* not afraid to be out in the streets alone," defiantly. "I 'll dress after dinner, and we 'll go downstairs quietly. Not that I care if any of them see me," — she asserted this boldly to bolster up her own courage, as well as to reassure Katy, — "but Mrs. Latimer 's sick, and I don't want to make any fuss."

"It 's mesilf 'd enj'y the cirkis," remarked Katy, "but it 's the goin' unbeknownst to the pore sick laidy that 's throublin' me, Miss Wannie. An' yer feyther 'll be sayin', 'Ka-r-ty Karney, ye 're a foine wan — lettin' that slip av a gyrle lade the both of yez into'" —

"Now you 're just talking to hear your own voice," interrupted Juanita triumphantly, "for you know very well that dad always lets me do just as I please." Which was so true that Katy's argument was destroyed.

Mrs. Latimer was too ill to take her usual place

at the dinner-table, and the meal was a quiet one, even Kittredge's saucy tongue being silent; and there was not the customary gathering in the drawing-room, — much to Juanita's satisfaction. Audrey went upstairs to put Jamie and Dorrie to bed. Kittredge and Rach remained in the dining-room, as being the most cheerful place that evening, and Sharley was with her mother. Ted had gone to his bookkeeping.

"I'm sorry to leave you all alone, Juan," Audrey said regretfully, "but as soon as Dorrie goes to sleep I'll come for you, and we'll have some fun in the schoolroom."

"Oh, you need n't," hastily replied Juanita. "I'm going straight to" — "bed," she intended to say, but the untruth stuck in her throat. Whatever Little John's faults might be, untruthfulness was not one of them. "I've something particular to do; you need n't bother to come," she finally said bluntly, pretending not to see Audrey's look of hurt surprise. Then she dashed into her own room, where was Katy — after a hurried dinner, which had excited the attention of Ann and the cook. "Quick, quick!" she cried. "Help me dress like a flash. We must get out before Audrey can come. Maybe that horrid Sharley'll be poking along, too. I don't care a snap if she finds out after we get back. At any rate, I'll have had the fun, and she could n't take that from me. I want one of my swellest gowns, Katy; that pink one will do. And *all* my diamonds. Goodness! it's such an age since I've had

on a decent thing that I 've almost forgotten how it feels to be dressed up. And we 'll get ahead of meddling Miss Sharley. Hurray! But I wish Audrey were going — and Teddy! You must fix up, too, Katy. You can wear my plush cloak over your dress. But *do* hurry! Oh, I hope we 'll get there time enough to see all the animals before the performance begins. Oh, *is n't* this fun!" She was all a-glee, with dancing eyes; a color flamed into her cheeks, and as she hurried her things on she talked and laughed merrily.

A little later in the evening Sharley unexpectedly opened her mother's door, and stepped out into the hall, just in time to meet two figures stealing down the stairs toward the front door. One was wrapped in a gorgeous red plush cloak, several sizes too narrow for the rotund form within its folds, and crowned with a curious glittering head-dress. The other figure wore a long shining white garment that covered it from head to feet, and from out the hood of which looked a pair of soft, lustrous black eyes, and a piquant girlish face.

There was a frightened, smothered exclamation, sounding like "Ow — murther!" and for a minute fraction of time the two cloaked figures and Sharley stared at one another. Then Juanita cried out, "*Come* on, Katy!" and made a bold dash for the door.

But Sharley's benumbed wits were alert again, and in a second she had taken a stand directly in the way.

"Go straight to your room, Katy Karney, and

take off those ridiculous clothes," Sharley commanded. "Are n't you ashamed of encouraging your mistress in such slyness as this!" Her voice was low-pitched, but so cold and stern that every word stung. All Katy's complacency deserted her; her round face assumed an expression of almost terror, and with a little whimpering sound — wiping her eyes with a corner of Juanita's plush cloak — she instantly turned to ascend the stairs.

Quickly following up her advantage, Sharley threw an arm across Juanita's shoulders and swept her into the drawing-room with a swiftness and strength that the other girl could not resist.

In a trice the doors were shut; then Sharley faced around. "What does this mean, Juanita? Oh, how *could* you do such a thing!" she exclaimed, a hurt reproach in her voice, which had not been there when she spoke to Katy.

With angry, impetuous fingers Little John tore off the long cloak, and disclosed herself in all the glory of the pink gown. A string of large pearls lay around her slender bare throat, and with every movement brilliant rays flashed from the jewels that were scattered over her dress and childish arms. She was truly a dazzling sight. Even in that trying moment, a fleeting sense of amusement stirred Sharley. "Where could she have been going? Poor, foolish, overdressed child!" she thought.

But Juanita was troubled with no doubts as to the fitness of her toilet; she was furiously angry, and did not stop to choose her words politely.

"'What does this *me-an?*'" she mimicked scornfully. "It means that I am going out this evening — to the circus — don't faint! and Katy's going with me. You've no business to come interfering in what doesn't concern you! I've got a box — and I'm *going*" (she stamped her foot). "D' you understand? I'm going — and you need n't think you'll prevent me. Get out of the way, or I'll make you!" She sprang forward and tried to push Sharley from the door. But the older girl held her back with one hand, hastily locking the drawing-room door with the other.

Sharley's face had grown very red as she listened to Juanita's tirade, her lips took a firmer set, but she managed to keep her voice calm and low-pitched. The little mother's room was on that floor, at the end of the hall; not for worlds must she hear of this trouble to-night, in her weak condition. "Don't get so angry, Juanita," she said, making an effort to be mild, and succeeding in being judicial, "and *please* lower your voice. If you wanted to go to the circus, why didn't you speak to mother or me about it, and not attempt to go out at night in this underhanded fashion? I think — as you are living under our charge — that we have a right to expect you would have spoken to mother or me."

"*You!*" cried Little John, stung by the word "underhanded," and the more that she felt it was deserved. "I'm not under *your* charge — not much! And you need n't think you'll order me around as you do Audrey and all the others."

Sharley's start and pained expression were such a satisfaction that Juanie condescended to explain. "I got the box this afternoon while we were out, and I 'd have asked the whole lot of you to go, too, but I just knew you would n't. So I made up my mind I 'd go alone — with Katy. You need n't say so grandly, why did n't I speak to you or your mother 'bout going, as if you 'd have taken me to the circus, for you know very well you would n't." She nodded shrewdly at Sharley. "You 're all such pokes — so grand, and so awfully fond of work, work, work the whole livelong time, that you would turn up your nose at any fun. And I just *love* to have fun!"

Her voice had lowered somewhat during these remarks; and Sharley hastened to say soothingly: "Oh, but you are mistaken; we do like fun, and I am sure that were I to tell mother you would like to go to the circus, she would make no objection, provided you went as she would wish you to. Perhaps we could arrange for next Saturday afternoon" —

Foiled in her attempt to open the door, Juanita had drawn a little apart. She stood with her head thrown back defiantly, her chin in the air, swinging her long white cloak nervously by its strap, while it lay in shimmering billows along the floor. "Next Saturday afternoon — and this is Tuesday," she interrupted, taking a step forward, her eyes flashing. "And a stupid old matinée at that — for *you* to go along and just spoil everything. No, I won't! I 'll go *to-night*, and I 'll go other times,

too, just as often as I please. I 've just *got* to have some pleasure, or I 'll telegraph to daddy to come an' take me right home. What 's the sense of being in New York, and not going to a single place? Why, at home I had heaps of fun — with the horses and the dogs — and riding and driving — the hotel — hops — balls — something or other was happening all the time — while here " — Her voice broke, and she dashed the tears from her eyes with the back of her hand. " Now if you *really* wanted me to have some pleasure, you 'd get ready and go to the circus with me this evening — now," she added, with a strong and evident effort toward persuasion. " I 've got the tickets right here; if we hurry, the performance would n't have gone very far! "

" Oh, I could n't leave mother to-night! " exclaimed Sharley positively; " but Saturday " —

" I will *not* go Saturday — I will go to-night — now — this very minute! " blazed out Juanita. " *I* know what I 'll do! I *won't* have you treat me this way! I 'll tell your mother the whole thing! She 'll let me go! " With a swift, unexpected movement, she darted across the long drawing-room to another, smaller door, which was seldom used, and was nearer Mrs. Latimer's apartment.

But, quick as she was, Sharley was quicker. Catching Juanita round the waist, before she could reach the door, Sharley half carried, half pulled her back to the farther end, where they had been standing, and set her down, but not roughly, on a

sofa. "Don't you call out — and don't you *dare* go to my mother to-night with any trouble!" she cried, with a sudden passionate vehemence that startled, and, for the moment, controlled Juanita. "She has had a wretched day — the least excitement might make her very ill. You cannot see her."

Then Little John's eyes grew hard, her lips curled scornfully; she got up from the sofa and glanced at the cathedral clock on the mantel. "If you don't open the door and let me go to the circus in just two minutes," she said deliberately, "I 'll yell out at the top of my voice and tell Mrs. Latimer the whole story. She can easily hear every word from where I stand. You don't fool me, I can tell you! Remember, *two* minutes!" And she looked equal to carrying out her threat.

Sharley turned white, catching her breath nervously. What *should* she do? Then she made a sudden desperate resolve. "Juanita," she said slowly, trying, though in vain, to steady her shaking voice, "I will tell you why you must not excite mother — to-night or at any time. It is a great secret, — only Teddy and I know it, — but I am going to trust you — I am going to let you share the secret with us. Mother — our darling little mother — has — has" — Sharley threw out her hands as if in physical pain, her voice dropped to a dry, sharp whisper — "she has some serious heart trouble. A sudden shock — a worry — any excitement whatever, of joy or sorrow — might — might — *cause her death!*"

"O-oh!" exclaimed Juanita, with a gasp of astonished horror, and a queer suffocating sensation in her throat.

For an instant they stood looking at each other in dead silence. Then Sharley spoke. "Do you wonder now — that Ted and I try to shield her from every trial — every annoyance that we can?" she said. Like many people who are of a reserved nature Sharley had her times of expansiveness; this was one of them. In the extreme nervous tension of the moment she felt it a distinct relief to speak out what had been pent up in her heart for so long. "I have known of — her condition — for years," she went on; "but she — she does not dream of any such thing. 'T was just about a year after father's death that — Dr. Atkin — our old family physician — told me. I was seventeen — a little older than you are now, Juanita, — and I could *never* forget those first few months! They were awful!" Sharley shuddered at the recollection. "I could think of nothing else, no matter what I was doing. I hated to leave mother — for even a minute — for fear she might — be — gone — before I could get back to her! I used to lie awake at night to watch her — I used to start up from my sleep — and listen — frightened lest she had — stopped breathing! I do it now — many a night. Oh! and then I thank God with all my strength that we still have her! I kept the secret to myself as long as I could; I knew what a grief it would be to the others. And then, one day when Ted was nineteen, I told him. Oh, it was

such a comfort to have him know! I *had* to tell him — I could n't bear the knowledge alone any longer. And now that you, too, know — you must help Ted and me to take care of mother. You will not go to her with any trouble that you and I can settle between us, will you?" Sharley's tone was pleading, almost imploring. "You think I like to order everybody — to 'boss,' as you express it — but I don't. I simply take the lead and settle whatever I can — to save mother from the wear and tear — the little trying worries that come with every day. Think of that, some time, when you feel like blaming me. Oh, if I could *tell* you how I love her — my dear, sweet, pretty little mother!" she cried out in that sharp, broken whisper, so unlike Sharley's cool, calm utterances, and smiting her hands together. "The thought of — losing her — turns me sick with terror. Such a loving, winsome little mother! I would willingly — gladly — give my life for her — to spare her pain and suffering — to restore her to health again! I have prayed for her — with all my heart and soul and strength. And God has heard — He has spared her — longer than Dr. Atkin thought. Oh, help me — Teddy and me — help us to plead with God for her! Do you understand? *Can* you understand how I feel?" She broke off abruptly, choking with intense emotion.

"Yes — yes — I know — I know!" exclaimed Little John eagerly, taking a step forward. The angry flash had died out of her eyes; they were soft now, and luminous, and her little red mouth

held curves of sweetness. "I know what you mean — I never understood it, though, till this minute. But that 's the way I love my daddy — I *love* him!" clasping her hands fervently over her heart. "I 'd give my life to save his! And I love your mother, too."

"Then you will not trouble her about this — to-night? Going to the circus, I mean?" asked Sharley. Her eyes looked big and strained.

Little John tore off her long gloves, and, picking up her cloak, pulled out the tickets from an inside pocket. "See here!" she said, and tore them vigorously into shreds.

"And you will keep my secret — you will not allude — you will not even breathe it to Audrey — or any creature?" Sharley asked anxiously.

"And you must never — never — let mother guess! Promise me — I 've trusted you!"

"I 'll never, *never* tell — Audrey or anybody else — I promise!" answered Juanita earnestly, holding up her left hand, with a vague idea that that made her word more binding. "You may trust me — I can keep a secret — truly, I can!"

"Thank you!" said Sharley warmly; then, slowly, speaking with a strong effort at self-control, "And I will see that you have some amusement, Juanita. Perhaps we have n't done our duty by you in that respect, but the omission was not intentional, I assure you. Now, I 'll go back to mother and relieve Ann, who is with her. Mother must be wondering what has become of me." She put her hands on the younger girl's shoulders

and bent and kissed her, for the first time since Juanie had been in the family. "Good-night," she said; "and thank you, with all my heart, for giving up your plan for me."

Juanita looked up a little shyly. "You won't tell Audrey — or — or — Teddy — about to-night — will you?" she asked coaxingly.

"Not a syllable," Sharley assured her. "I promi—" Then, suddenly, her chin began to quiver, her whole face to work with emotion. "Go — go — quickly — oh, *please!*" she entreated, giving Juanita a slight push from her.

And with a rare obedience Little John caught up her gloves and cloak, and went swiftly from the room, closing the door softly behind her.

Then Sharley sat down on the sofa, and, burying her face in the cushions, wept herself into strength and calmness before returning to her mother.

CHAPTER VI

LOHENGRIN

Little John and Agagio were sitting on the floor in Juanita's room. It was Saturday morning, and the two had been enjoying a grand romp. But first, Juanie had closed her door carefully, so that the inevitable noise should not escape and disturb Mrs. Latimer. Juanita had been much more thoughtful of such things lately, as several of the family had noticed; to these observers it seemed as if she could not do enough for the little mother.

"I think Juan loves mother dearly!" Audrey told Sharley, with conviction, one day. "It is n't only that she 's always bringing her flowers and fruit and all those things, — she would do that for anybody, she 's so generous, — but it is the way she acts that makes me think so. She 's quieter than she used to be, and so nice, — so sweet and gentle and loving to mother. And she does n't keep bothering her about things as she used to. Have n't you seen it, Sharley? I did n't think 't was in Juan to be — well, so mild to anybody. I don't know how else to describe the change. She 's the same with us that she ever was, though; she 'd just as soon have a fisticuff tussle with

Kit as look at him. But she is certainly different with mother. Now you notice."

Sharley knew the reason of Juanita's new manner to her mother; her heart warmed to the girl, and she grew more lenient toward her faults, more capable of appreciating her good qualities. But when Mrs. Latimer asked nervously one day, when Little John had just left her, "My dear Sharley, why does that child look at me with such woe-begone eyes? Is she unhappy? Or is there anything about me to make her feel sad?" Sharley thought best to interview Juanita and impress upon her the necessity of presenting a cheerful countenance.

"But I keep thinking of — of what you said might happen. I can't forget it — and I feel so awfully sorry!" Little John urged in extenuation. "I *can't* help it!" she added, breaking into the remonstrance Sharley had commenced.

"Oh, but you must, Juanita," Sharley said with alarm, "or you may do mother a great deal of harm. She will begin to suspect something; and then I would never forgive myself for having told you. You *must* be cheerful when you are with her," adding hastily, as Juanita's chin went up in the air: "For her sake you must guard your face, and, no matter how you feel, make no sign of sadness where she could see and be affected by it. I know you can keep a secret." (Audrey had told her the story of Don Miguel and the ruby.) "You are keeping Pedro's secret — keep mine as well. Remember how I have trusted you!

Be merry and bright — be your usual self; then she could never suspect anything. Will you?"

"You need n't be afraid *I'd* ever tell the secret to anybody," replied Little John proudly. "I would n't do such a contemptible thing. And I did n't know I was looking 'woe-begone' — I did n't mean to. But it is n't very easy to be smirking and smiling when you feel — you feel," very quickly and pretending to be glancing out of the window, "you could hardly help — well, just letting the tears come."

"I have done it for five years — and I 'm her own child — and love her better than you ever could! It is *because* I love her so dearly — for her sake — that I control my feelings," Sharley said quickly, with the same low-voiced, but intense, almost fierce, vehemence that had surprised and awed Juanita that night in the drawing-room. It impressed her now. She gazed thoughtfully at Sharley. Did keeping one's grief to one's self mean loving another person — say Mrs. Latimer — the better? she wondered. It was the first time that such an idea had been presented to her mind. "Wonder if I could ever act that way if 't were daddy ill — like Mrs. Latimer is?" she speculated. "*Good*ness! if I thought he was going to die I 'd be rolling on the floor and just howling! Oh, I *could n't* go round smiling and quiet like Sharley — I 'd feel terrible! But he is n't sick — he 's well — well! Oh, I 'm so glad — my dear old daddy!" Her heart gave a joyful little thump; and a warm pity for Sharley

made her voice unusually gentle as she said, "Well; I'll try — truly I will." And try she did — to such good purpose that Mrs. Latimer had no more sad looks to complain of.

Mistress and dog had been having a fine romp this Saturday morning; the day was clear and sunny, and both Gag and his owner felt in good spirits. Now they were resting. Little John sat cross-legged on the floor, vigorously fanning herself, and on his haunches before her was Agagio, with his ears cocked, his tongue lolling out, his eyes bright with mischief, and in his whole bearing an air of debonair, waggish impudence that was almost irresistible. It moved Juanita to laughter.

"Gag," she said suddenly, "I'll give you a bath this morning."

In an instant what a change! Down went Agagio's ears, his gayety vanished, his tail fell between his legs, and he began rapidly slinking off toward the bed, with a view to hiding himself under its friendly shelter.

"Now you need n't think you'll get out of it that way!" cried Juanita. Rolling over quickly she caught the fugitive by the collar. "Here, Katy," she said, scrambling to her feet, "hold him while I put on something loose. Now get the scrubbing-brush and soap, and the sheet to dry him with. Come on!"

But Katy demurred — it was hot and hard work washing the big dog. "Is n't it afther axin' the madam ye'd better be — if it's convainient

for yeze to use the bathtub?" she suggested. "The madam" was a new name which she had given Sharley since that memorable evening of the discovery in the hall, and without the least intention of sarcasm. There had been a very disagreeable quarter of an hour for Katy the next morning — an interview, the particulars of which she never made public, even to Juanita, and from which she emerged with no resentment whatever, but rather with an added respect for the "quality" of which Sharley was composed. Neither mistress nor maid had commented much to the other on the exploit of that evening, each having a secret but strong conviction that the other was ashamed of her part in it, which was especially true of Katy.

"Ask her? well, I guess not!" declared Juanita. "Next you'd like me to ask permission to wash my own face! Come along!"

Jamie met the procession in the hall. "Going to 'bath' Gag?" he exclaimed eagerly. "Oh, let me see him! Oh, and Dorrie, too!" Rushing upstairs, he called "Dorrie! Dorrie! Come on down quick an' see Gagio have a bath."

"All light — oh yes!" shouted back the little maid, and soon she came pattering down the stairs as fast as she could, taking one step at a time, and swinging her favorite doll, Daffy, by its sole remaining arm.

All were in high glee except the unfortunate Agagio, who took each step forward with the utmost solemnity and reluctance. He rolled his

eyes beseechingly from one to another in the small company; and when Katy turned on the water in the tub and Juanita lifted him bodily into it, an expression of such deep, hopeless gloom settled on Gagio's black-and-white countenance as to provoke the bystanders to merriment. He looked positively haggard! Then began the scrubbing, which he endured with the meekness of a lamb, or the resignation of one who knows that resistance is useless.

"Cheer up, Gag!" encouraged Little John, as she sent the scrubbing-brush whirring all over him. "Yes, cheer up, Gag!" echoed the children. But Agagio was too thoroughly unhappy to receive comfort from these well-meant but futile efforts, — sitting head and shoulders above the edge of the bathtub, his ears lying dejectedly flat to his head, his under jaw drooping in the most abject misery, giving at his mistress's command first one paw and then the other, to be scrubbed.

"Oh, Katy!" suddenly exclaimed Juanita, when the bath was almost half over; "we forgot — the ginger-snaps!"

"Indade, an' thin I did n't, neyther," replied Katy, bringing into view a paper of ginger-snaps, of which delicacy the terrier was exceedingly fond. Dorrie was allowed to feed them to Agagio at intervals during the progress of the bath; and a faint gleam of something approaching satisfaction appeared on the big dog's face as he wearily crunched each crisp cake once or twice under his strong teeth before gulping it down.

But when the hateful scrubbing and sponging were over, and permission was given to leave the degrading bathtub, what joy filled Agagio's being! In a transport of delight, he leaped out and hid his dripping body in the folds of the sheet which Katy held waiting. Good humor and self-esteem returned to him in a rush; he allowed himself to be rubbed and turned and twisted, wagging his tail, cocking his ears jauntily, with renewed pleasure in life, and leaping gayly up, eager to lick every inch of Little John's face, if she would but allow it. When the whole performance was over, and his freshly polished brass collar was again fastened around his neck, a more grateful (that the bath was over) or happier dog than Agagio Kyle it would have been hard to find.

His mistress was equally well pleased to have "that job off her hands," as she expressed it, and the party returned in high good humor to Little John's apartment, where Audrey, in evident excitement, met them on the threshold.

"I heard you coming — so I waited — instead of going to meet you," she said, still out of breath from her race upstairs. "Oh, Juan!" she exclaimed gleefully, "we 're going out this afternoon — you and I! It seems Sharley went to get tickets for us — the dear thing! for to-day's matinée — and she met Mrs. Burton — you know, Roger's mother — and what d' you suppose? She insisted we should come and — sit with her, in her box. She has one for the season. Won't that be fun! I 've never sat in a box — have you?

Sharley says she does n't care to go — I guess she does n't want to leave mother. I told her *I'd* stay at home and let her go — I begged her to let me, but she will not. So you and I are to go — and Ted. Is n't it splendid?"

"Oh, *beau*tiful! hurray!" cried Juanita, with a skip of delight. She sent the half-filled bag of ginger-snaps, which she had been holding, flying on to the bed. "Being a matinée we can't dress up as we would for the evening, but I 'll wear my new tailor gown. Get it out, Katy, quick — and all my hats — I 'll see which 'll look best with it. Oh — but what 're we going to see? You have n't said."

"So I have n't! Well! what a scatter-brain I am," laughed Audrey. "We 're going to the opera — grand opera, if you please! And it 's "—

"Oh, pshaw!" broke in Little John in disappointment and disgust. "I thought 't would be the circus or the theatre. *I* don't want to go to the opera. Dad went once, and he says he 'll never go again, and that it 's the *stu*pidest, dullest, *silliest* old flat rubbish! He says people don't tear round and howl out a lot of songs when they 're mad or glad, or dying, like they do in opera. He just could n't stand it; he had to get up and leave before 't was over. I don't want to go and listen to such stuff; I 'd rather stay home the whole livelong time." She hastily turned her back on the hats which Katy had begun setting out in a row on the bed, and tapped the floor angrily with her foot.

"Oh, Juan, *do* go!" pleaded Audrey. "To-day it 's Lohengrin, and oh! it is a perfectly beautiful opera! I know the music and it is *sweet!* And some of the great singers are to sing in it. You know opera may be differently rendered in Anaconda to what it is here. Oh, I 'm sure you would like Lohengrin. Don't you remember how you enjoyed the quaint, weird German stories I told you the other day — the Nibelungen? Well, Lohengrin is just as pretty as any of those. I think you 'll be able to follow some of what is said, — it 's sung in German, you know, — and Teddy and I 'll tell you the rest. We know the story by heart. Oh, and it 's such fun looking at the people between the acts, and listening to the music. I know you 'll be awfully sorry if you miss it!"

"You say Teddy is going?" asked Juanita abruptly.

Audrey laughed. "I should think he *was* going," she said merrily. "Catch Ted missing such a treat! I 'm only sorry," regretfully, "that Sharley can't go. We 're to have lunch early today, and Ted 'll be home in time for it, Sharley says. Then he 'll take us up to the Metropolitan Opera House, where we are to meet Mrs. Burton."

Little John's face cleared, her frown vanished. "I guess I 'll go," she said with decision, walking toward the bed where the hats lay. "If I don't like it I can come out."

"You 'll not come out — you 'll not want to. See if you do," Audrey told her merrily. "Now get dressed as quick as you can," and she ran off

to make her own toilet, taking Jamie and Dorrie away with her; Agagio lay asleep on the floor in the sunshine.

When Ted came rushing into the drawing-room a little later in the day, he found Juanita before the pier glass subjecting the new tailor-made gown to a critical scrutiny, and meanwhile humming "Teresita Mia." Teddy carried a long, narrow white box under his arm; his eyes were bright, and he appeared in the best of spirits. "Hullo!" he remarked, eyeing Little John with approval. "Tell you what, now — that's a swagger gown and no mistake!"

With a pleased, gay little laugh Juanita held out her skirts at the sides, and made him a sweeping bow of thanks. "And don't you like my hat?" she asked anxiously. "It's a new one. Is n't it a peach?"

Teddy suddenly remembered his commission to reform Little John of her slang-loving propensity. He concluded that this was as good an opportunity as any other in which to begin. "Now, why did you call that pretty hat a 'peach'?" he commenced in a slightly argumentative and wholly persuasive tone. He put his box down and lounged up against the mantelpiece, his hands in his pockets. "Peach is the name of a fruit, not a hat — no charge made for that important piece of information. I *have* heard of such a word being in the slang dictionary, but nice girls," shooting a keen glance at her from his kindly, blue-gray eyes, "never use slang."

Little John stuck her chin up in the air and drew down the corners of her mouth. "H'm!" she said. "How about 'nice' boys that talk slang from morning until night — Teddy Latimer, for instance? Guess *you'd* better not say anything to me!" ending with a triumphant laugh.

"Oh, but it's very different with me — one expects a girl to be a thousand times nicer than a boy — a man," hastily explained Ted, not quite appreciating the turn the conversation had taken.

"Oh, does one!" cried Juanita. She took a step forward. "Well — I *don't!* I don't see why boys should be allowed to say and do things that girls can't. And if you're going to preach to me, Mr. Teddy, you'll have to stop using slang yourself, first. I shall say as many slang words as I choose — my hat is a peach — a peach — a *peach!*"

"Oh, all right! set it to a tune and sing it — *I* don't care! I only spoke for your good," declared Teddy, turning away with a fine air of indifference. But secretly he was not at all sorry that Sharley was not present. Taking up his box, he marched off to the other end of the drawing-room with it, and turning her back upon him, Little John drummed on the window pane and sang "Teresita Mia" in quite a loud voice.

But already she repented of her sharp speech, and when presently Teddy called, in the friendliest voice imaginable, "Say — Little John!" she suddenly recovered her good humor and walked toward him.

Copperfield had turned the paper box wrong side up, and spread out upon it were four good-sized bunches of violets. One bunch was a trifle larger, fuller than the others, and that lay a little apart from them. "This," said Ted, laying his hand on it, "is for mums; the other three are for you girls — you, Sharley, and Audrey. I think they're all about one size," motioning to the flowers. "But take your choice — with the compliments of your humble servant — and mentor!" His eyes were so brimful of merriment that Juanita had to laugh.

"These are just what I wanted. Thanks, awfully!" she said, pinning the bunch she had chosen on the front of her coat.

"Now that we've buried the hatchet, I'll tell you something," remarked Teddy. Juanita could not but notice his beaming countenance. "But remember — mum's the word! Now sure — not to a living creature. Well — I've made some money — to-day — quite a hatful — for me! And on the strength of the good luck I indulged in these violets; I wanted you people to rejoice with me."

"Oh, isn't that splendid!" exclaimed Little John eagerly. She felt very much flattered at the confidence Ted had reposed in her — that he should have told *her* and not Sharley or Audrey! "I hope it's a great lot; so you won't have to keep on slaving at that horrid old bookkeeping," she added.

Ted arched his eyebrows at her. "Give up the

bookkeeping! Oh, your notions are entirely too big!" he said. "What I've made is n't what *you* might call a fortune — 't is n't equal to a silver mine," with a sly grin; "but these things are all comparative, you know; it's a good deal to me. I only wish I could do it every day — tell you! mums would live in clover! And I made it as easy as turning my hand over!" Hearing a step in the hall, he hastily changed the subject. "Ever heard Lohengrin before?" he asked.

"No; and I'm not crazy to hear it now," answered Juanita.

Ted's look, first of surprise, then of condescending pity, made more impression on Little John than had all Audrey's enthusiasm. "Just wait till you've heard it — that's all — just wait! You'll sing a very different tune," he predicted, with an emphatic wave of his hand.

"Violets!" exclaimed Sharley, looking in at the door. "Ah! I thought my nose did not deceive me. For me? How nice of you, Ted! A-a-h!" sniffing up the exquisite perfume. "But violets at this time of the year — mean money; you extravagant boy!" For all her pleasure in the gift, there came a little anxious expression into Sharley's eyes.

"Don't you worry about the expense — I'll take care of that. All I ask you to do is to enjoy the flowers," observed Teddy dryly, apparently too busy arranging his bouquets to look at his sister.

"Now don't you like it? Are n't you glad you

came? Is n't this lovely?" eagerly asked Audrey when they had met Mrs. Burton and were comfortably settled in that lady's box in the opera house.

Little John's eyes were soft and shining; the corners of her red lips curved happily upward; the vast, brilliantly lighted house, the gayly dressed, smiling crowds, the flutter of excitement, the exquisite music of the overture, filled her with a great and most unexpected delight. "Oh — it 's lovely! lovely!" she exclaimed radiantly, in answer to Audrey's questions. "I wish 't would be like this all through, and no singing."

"Remember what I told you — what I predicted!" warned Ted laughingly; he had the chair directly behind Juanita. "Why — don't you know the story?" he went on in surprise. "Audrey is so devoted to King Arthur, and all those old marvelous tales of the Holy Grail, that I thought she 'd surely have filled your head with 'em, too. No, don't bother with the libretto," he took it from her and threw it aside; "I 'll post you on what 's happening, as we go along."

He knew the story well, and enough of German to follow the singers pretty closely. But Little John's interest remained cold until Elsa made her appearance; and then she warmed into indignation.

"What an idiot she is — to stand there like a tame cat and let that horrid Frederick say such wicked things about her!" she exclaimed, so loudly that Mrs. Burton looked at her and said gently, "Sh!" and Teddy, with a glance of amusement at

Audrey, advised in a fatherly tone, "Now don't get excited too soon! This is n't a circumstance to what is to follow."

"Oh, I know very well it's only a play," Juanita said impatiently, sitting up and looking around the house with an air of indifference, which, however, lasted only until the approach of Lohengrin in the skiff, drawn by the graceful, milk-white swan. After that she threw all indifference to the winds, and gave herself entirely up to the fascination of the hour. Leaning forward, with clasped hands lying extended before her on the cushioned edge of the box, her eyes fixed on the stage, her ears filled with the entrancing music, her vivid, mobile face reflecting the varying, unusual emotion which moved her, she listened eagerly, and yet as one in a dream, to Teddy's vigorous and sympathetic, if up-to-date version of the quaint, beautiful, tenth-century story. For her, just then, the singers had no individuality save that of the characters they impersonated; their words were truth, their emotions real. She laughed joyously, clapping her hands with glee, when Telramund was defeated, and frowned heavily during the interview between Elsa and Ortrud before the palace. "I *hate* that Ortrud!" she exclaimed, beating her small gloved fist on the cushion; then added, almost imploringly, "Oh, Elsa — Elsa! don't listen to her! oh, *don't!*"

In the scene where Elsa pleads with Lohengrin to reveal his secret — in her curiosity losing her happiness — Juanita said, slowly nodding her

head: "That's what I used to do — promise daddy I would n't ask a word — and then turn round and tease and torment him until he told me the whole thing! But I won't again — no, I won't!" Her face grew pale. "Oh, Teddy! why does n't she just *trust* him!" she cried, in a low tone of despair. The piteous droop of her mouth, the trouble in her wide-opened soft black eyes went straight to Ted's heart.

"Don't feel so badly over it, Little John," he stopped his story to say; and there was a tenderness in his voice. "It is n't real — it is n't true, you know."

But Little John was beyond such comfort, and when the end came — when Lohengrin had declared himself the son of Parsifal, had sung his last, exquisite, inexpressibly sad song, his farewell to Elsa, and had stepped again into the magic skiff, the poor child's self-control entirely deserted her. Springing desperately from her chair, she ran to the back of the box, and sinking down in a little heap on the step, burst into a storm of sobs.

"Dear me! what a very excitable nature!" exclaimed Mrs. Burton, in distress; and Audrey hastily made her way to her friend. "Why, Juan, what's the matter?" she asked earnestly. "I thought you were enjoying it! Don't cry!"

But Teddy had reached Juanita first; he stood looking down at the little huddled-up figure, the shaking shoulders — sympathetic but helpless. "Let her alone — let her cry if she wants to," he said gruffly, to hide how much he felt. Then, as

a deafening roar of applause filled the house, he bent down. "Little John," he whispered, "the singers have been called out — before the curtain — don't you want to see them? — Elsa and Lohengrin? It might make you feel better, you know."

But Juanita shook her head. "I don't want to see them — ever again," she said, a little catch in her voice. "But give Elsa — these." She hurriedly unpinned the bunch of violets from her coat and put it into Ted's hands. "You don't mind — my giving them?" she asked, looking up wistfully. "I feel — *so* sorry for her!"

"I don't mind in the least," cheerfully asserted Teddy, and rushing to the front of the box, he threw the flowers with so sure an aim that they fell at Elsa's feet, and were acknowledged by her in a graceful bow of thanks.

Little John's tears could not readily be checked; and the party got into the full crush of the immense outflowing audience. It was while they were on the stairs — tightly wedged in — that some one called out loudly, in a voice flavored with a rich brogue: "Say, pop, ef that ain't Wannie Kyle over there, I'll be shot!" The next minute, the unwilling crowd parted a little, and a large stout woman, making excellent use of her elbows, came plunging toward them. She was gorgeously attired, and wore a brilliant ornament and a couple of small, unruly-looking feathers in her hair. She gathered Juanita into her arms, and gave her two sounding kisses, before that

astonished young person could offer any resistance.

But with recognition Little John beamed on her. Giving her chin a little flirt in the air as if throwing off her unusual gravity, she put out her hands eagerly to the newcomer: "Mrs. McGuffin!" she cried gladly, in clear, ringing tones that immediately interested the adjacent crowd, "how was my daddy when you left Anaconda? How 's everybody at the hotel — and at the ranch? — Pedro and the horses and the dogs? Oh, I want to hear about every single one!"

"*Cur*-rtainly, me dear, an' so ye shall — so ye shall," Mrs. McGuffin assured her. "We 've took a house — pop an' me an' Lonzo. On Fifth Av'noo. We 're in for style," giving Juanita a facetious poke with her elbow. "An' you 're to come see us for jus' as often an' long as you please — the more an' the longer the better — so says Lonzo an' me. We 'll have grand times — won't we though — eh?" ending with a wink to Juanita, and a jolly, chuckling laugh.

Audrey had grown red with embarrassment during this conversation; and Mrs. Burton's aristocratic eyebrows went up, as she asked of Ted, in an undertone, "Who *is* that loud-voiced, vulgar-looking person?"

Teddy shrugged his shoulders. "Oh — another bloomin' silver miner, I suppose," he said resignedly.

CHAPTER VII

ANACONDA FRIENDS

"AIN'T yer feelin' well the day, me darlint?" asked Katy anxiously, glancing up from her sewing. Juanita had been standing at the window, looking out, for quite a while, and saying not a word. Lessons were over for the day; they had passed off pretty well, all things considered, and in an hour or two Juanita, Audrey, and Katy were going to an art gallery to see some famous pictures which were on exhibition. Audrey knew the subjects of the paintings, and her enthusiasm had aroused an interest in her friend's mind; but now that she was alone Little John's face had grown very sober.

"Come tell yer ould Ka-rty what 's throublin' ye," urged the nurse, and then, turning from the window, Juanita went to her.

Catching up the frock on which Katy was working, she threw it in a little heap on the bed. "Now make a lap for me," she commanded; and in a minute more the tall girl was curled up on Katy's knees, her head snuggled in Katy's neck, Katy's arms wrapped lovingly around her. The faithful nurse's face beamed with satisfaction — an occasion such as this more than compensated

for all she might have suffered at Juanita's hands, and many words of endearment, English and Irish, were showered upon her nursling as they sat there rocking.

"Katy," Little John said presently, burrowing her nose a little deeper into Katy's fat neck, "you 've known lots of 'quality' in your life, have n't you? There was that Countess Thingamajig and her two daughters — you know, the twins. I suppose they were such elegant creatures that they hardly knew how to breathe — eh?"

Katy's complacent smile broadened until her small eyes nearly disappeared from view. "Well," she said importantly, "it 's mesilf that knows the r'ale article when Oi do be mating wid it. It 's the Countess of Balleduggan ye 'd be mentionin', mavourneen; an' the twins was the laidy Girildine an' the laidy Meery Jertrude. The foinest av quality they was — wid the gowlden cur-rls av 'em, an' the swate ways. Walkin' out in the par-rk er the lanes wid the governiss — 't was a *foine* body she was hersilf, that governiss; 't was the Quane's child'en er the Prince av Wales's she 'd been afther thrainin' before she come to Balleduggan. Well, as Oi was remarkin' — walkin' out in the par-rk er the lanes, er dhrivin' 't was always 'Good-mornin' to ye, Ka-rty,' er 'Moike' er 'Pat' er whosomever it might be — always perlite an' gracious an' willin' to pass the toime av day wid yez. Them is the ways av quality."

"Don't you suppose they ever talked slang — those girls? Bet you they did — when the old

governess was n't around," remarked Juanita with an incredulous sniff.

"An' what would yez be m'anin' by 'shlang'?" asked Katy cautiously, mindful of the Balleduggan honor.

Juanita sat up for a moment and looked reflective. "Oh," she said carelessly, "when people talk about 'swagger' clothes, and 'dandy larks,' and being 'stuck on 'emselves,' and, well — 'peach' — for a hat — and — oh, like that! I can't bother to think of any more. Those 're all slang. Now don't you suppose those Balleduggan girls said such words? — on the sly maybe — eh? I just bet they did! Oh, 'bet' is another slang word. Audrey says she thinks it's perfectly horrid! Well?"

"Indade, an' the laidy Girildine an' the laidy Meery Jertrude 'd never be spakin' horrid wur-rds at all, at all!" declared Katy positively. "An' wid a governiss that thrained the Quane's own child'en! What would ye be thinkin' av, Miss Wannie? An', anny way, noice gyrls, quality er no quality, don't s'ile their pretty lips wid such talk" —

Juanita started. "Somebody's been telling you 'bout me!" she exclaimed, shaking a finger at Katy.

"Not a blissid sowl!" protested the nurse. "An' why for should they?" turning a sharp scrutiny on the young face.

But Little John refused to gratify her curiosity. "Oh, don't you bother me!" she said, making a

moue at Katy, and sinking back on her capacious shoulder, from which shelter she presently asked, "If nice girls are n't to use slang, how about nice boys using it? It seems to me what is n't good for one can't be good for the other, either." She spoke with decision, remembering her argument in the drawing-room with Teddy on Saturday.

Katy took time to consider; the subject was one new to her mind. "Well," she said dubiously, when Juanita had given her a poke to "hurry up and answer," "b'ys will be b'ys — 't aint fer me to say. But," she added in a slightly livelier tone, as some light dawned upon her, "it 's fer the gyrls to make the b'ys noice. They could do it ef they 'd only be afther thryin'. They could — there 's no mishtake about that, fer Oi 've seen it toime an' agin wid me own two eyes. You know, a gyrl 's expected to be noicer 'n a b'y."

"H'm!" grunted Little John, "why don't *they* be nice to help the girls, I 'd like to know?" But Katy refused to take up the argument, and they rocked in silence for several minutes; then suddenly Juanita sat up. Her cheeks had grown rosy, and in her soft black eyes was a troubled, half-indignant expression. "Now look here, Katy Karney," she said sharply, though Katy had a suspicion that tears might not be far away; "I 've made up my mind to one thing — I 'm just going to try and stop using slang. *I* don't think it 's one *bit* of harm to say it — but — some people are *so* fussy! I 'll try — but I 'm positive I 'll forget

all about it — unless somebody reminds me. And I would n't have these tiresome Latimers know for the whole wide world. Now just you remember that, or I 'll never tell you another thing as long 's I live! Could n't you think of some way to remind me when I happen to say a slang word? of course, when you 're around. Some way that the others would n't catch on to — Oh, *bother!*" twisting her shoulders impatiently — "I mean that they would n't — eh — what *is* the word? — suspect? Oh, I *know* it 's going to be perfectly disgusting — to pick — and choose — and turn — and twist my words — every single time I 've anything to say. I suppose I 'll get to be the stiffest old poke — worse than Sharley." She pulled down the corners of her mouth and looked as prim as her vivid little face would allow. "Just to suit — some people! I hope they 'll be satisfied!" Then she turned on Katy. "Well," she said dismally, "can't you think of anything?"

"Oi moight cough," suggested Katy (she pronounced the last word as if spelled "kawf"), delighted to be taken into such confidence. "Loike this — eh?" indulging in a little chuckling cough behind her hand.

"Well," assented Little John after a minute's reflection, "only I hope I 'll remember what you 're coughing for. So that 's settled!" with a look of relief. She gave Katy a careless kiss, got up from her lap and, stretching her long girlish arms over her head, yawned audibly. "I don't know what to do with myself until we go out," she

said disconsolately; then her eyes fell upon Agagio, sound asleep under the bed. "Oh, I 'll have a game with Gag. Here, Gag! Come hunt the handkerchief — come on, you lazy thing! Go out in the hall while I hide the handkerchief — go *on!*" Hastily she bundled the terrier, whose eyes were hardly opened, into the hall, where he remained until his mistress had run over to the farthest end of the room and hidden the handkerchief under a corner of the rug. Then, at her ringing, jubilant call of, "Come, Gag! Come along, old fellow, and find it!" he bounded into the room in high spirits, and a great game of romps began.

It was the next afternoon, while Jaunita was in Audrey's room, stretched off at full length on the improvised lounge, being read to by her friend, that Katy came up the attic stairs and stood panting in the doorway.

"Sit down, Katy, and get your breath well before you begin to talk," Audrey said kindly, pushing a chair toward her, while Little John regarded her with grave, inquiring eyes. "Well," she remarked, "when you get ready, tell us what brought you."

And so full of her news was Katy, that gaspingly — with one hand still pressed on her side — she immediately unburdened herself of it. "Dinnis an' Dalia McGuffin 's down in the dthrawin'-room — no, it ain't, neyther," a twinkle in her small eyes; "it 's Mistor an' Misthress McGuffin of Anaconda! 'T was that Oi was tould ter say.

An' it 's afther seein' yez they 'd be. An', Miss Andrey" (this was Katy's peculiar and invariable rendering of Audrey's name), " it 's Miss Sharley 'd be wantin' ye downsteres, Ann says."

" We 'll go together, Aud," Juanita said, getting up quickly from the Sorrento-covered lounge. " These are the people I told you I met at the opera. Come on!"

But Katy plucked at her gown with a wink and a funny contortion of the face. " Wait till I tell ye!" she said, in an eager stage whisper which Audrey could not help but hear, and which sent her quickly downstairs ahead of her friend.

" Oi was walkin' through the hall when — the bell rings," began Katy, launching into her story before Audrey's back was well turned; " an' ter spare Ann thim steps, thinks Oi ter mesilf, ' Oi 'll answer the bell.' An' me dear," holding up her hands, " when Oi open that dore who was it shtandin' there but Dalia McGuffin, dhressed as foine as a p'acock, an' p'apin' over her shoulder — ye moind the small gossoon size av 'im — was Dinnis. Well, Oi was that sthruck niver a wur-rd did Oi spake. ' Hello, Ka-rty! an' how air ye?' sez Dinnis, quite pleasant. But Dalia McGuffin shticks her nose up an' sez she, — Oi moighter been the dir-rt under her fate, — ' Show me to the parlor,' sez she very grand. ' It 's Miss Wannie Kyle that Mistor an' Misthress McGuffin are afther callin' on.' An' did ye iver know the loikes er that!" broke off Katy indignantly. " Dalia McGuffin — 't was Dalia Finnigan she was — livin'

in the l'akiest av cabins in the ould counthry — an' gettin' the only dacint m'ale she 'd be atin' from me mother! She — an' Dinnis, too — with niver a shoe to their fate — an' *Oi* allowed up to the Castle, an' wid the airl an' me laidy always a-sayin', 'Good-mornin' to yez, Ka-rty;' long av me mother bein' foster-mother to the laidy Girildine an' the laidy Meery Jertrude when the countess was that ill she could n't put an eye on 'em. Bare feet — not even a praetie to their mouth — an' now puttin' on airs on Ka-rty Karney — beca'se they 've just sthruck on a silver moine — well!" Katy stopped for breath, and fanned her heated face with a corner of her apron.

Little John looked at her in surprise. Never before had she seen her good-natured, easy-going nurse so excited and angry. "Suppose they were awfully poor — that is n't anything against 'em," she said presently, in a somewhat argumentative tone. "Daddy used to go barefoot in Ireland, when he was a boy — I guess he went hungry, too, many a time" —

"Faith an' he did that — but niver a sacret would he be makin' av it," interrupted Katy, with a lively recollection of many a reminiscent talk which she and the Anaconda mine-owner had enjoyed together. "An' as fer puttin' on airs — your feyther 's a wise man, an' he ain't so much as ter be mintioned in the same breath wid Dinnis an' Dalia McGuffin. It 's not mistor and misthress Oi 'll be callin' the loikes av thim — the upstarts! An' Miss Wannie, darlint," her tone grew earnest,

"don't ye be afther gettin' intimate wid thim an' that spalpeen av a b'y, Lonzo. They ain't the kind av comp'ny fer you to be kapin'. Your feyther 'll not be loikin' it. Be war-rned, me dearie, moind yer old Ka-rty."

Her appealing eyes touched Little John; throwing her arm across Katy's shoulder, she gave her a squeeze. "Don't you worry about me," she said confidently. "Why, I'm glad the McGuffins 've come, for I want to hear all about daddy. And they're real jolly people, too — not dull and poky like the Latimers. And never you mind — don't bother yourself over their snubbings, Katy," rubbing her cheek caressingly against her nurse's. "I guess they don't know any better. Now cheer up! Oh, I can't wait to hear the rest!" Then she rushed out of the room and headlong down the stairs to the drawing-room.

"The rest," which Juanita would not stay to hear, was the account of how Katy had received "Dalia" McGuffin's haughtiness. With head thrown back, eyes narrowed almost to a slit, and her most complacent smile, Katy had drawled out: "Ah, indade — mistor an' misthress, is it? Faith now, Oi 'd have been afther thinkin' 't was Dinnis an' Dalia as useter be rampagin' round in the ould counthry with neyther shoe ter their fate nor food ter their mouth. Ah, but 't is ownin' a silver moine ye are now — sence Oi las' saw ye, ain't it? An' that 's sent yeze up ter Mistor an' Misthress McGuffin — even ter ould friends. Oi *have* heard tell av beggars on horseback" —

"Now, now, Ka-rty!" began Mr. McGuffin soothingly; but his wife turned angrily on him. "Just you be kapin' quiet, now, pop — I can do the talkin'," she declared; then, to the smiling Katy, with a very high and mighty air: "It's Miss Wannie Kyle we're wantin' — an' not to be wastin' toime on her maid. I preshume this is the drorin'-room. Come on, Dinnis!" And with a grand sweep she sailed past Katy, meekly followed by her husband.

But ere she reached the drawing-room door, Ann appeared upon the scene. Not knowing of Katy's kindness in her behalf, and having allowed the visitor a reasonable length of time in which to cool his heels on the stoop, she had bethought herself to come up and open the door, and now she stood regarding Katy and the newcomers with alert curiosity.

"Now, Dalia, be afther givin' yer cyards to Ann," remarked Katy patronizingly, before Mrs. McGuffin had time to speak. "An', as ye'll shorely be knowin', it's Mrs. Latimer you'll be callin' on, too, — bein' as Miss Wannie's in her house. Thim's the ways av the quality — *Oi* ain't acquainted wid no other. *No* cyards!" holding up her hands in horrified astonishment, while the mortified and indignant Mrs. McGuffin turned the color of a boiled lobster. "Why, Dalia! — an' ye callin' yerself a fash'n'ble laidy! Shtep into the dthrawin'-room. Laidies furst, Dinnis," as Mr. McGuffin in his embarrassment hastily stepped before his wife and the two collided in

the doorway, "an' gintlemen afther. Now, Ann, will yer plaze ter be informin' Mrs. Latimer that *Mistor* an' *Misthress*," oh! the emphasis! — "McGuffin of Anaconda are callin' on 'er; an' Oi 'll tell Miss Wannie." Then, feeling that she had proved herself completely mistress of the situation, Katy had turned and run up to the fourth floor as rapidly as her liberal share of avoirdupois would allow, appearing in Audrey's room, as we already know, out of breath, but by no means speechless.

So it came that, on reaching the drawing-room, Little John found Mrs. Latimer and Sharley there as well as the visitors from Anaconda. Mr. McGuffin — a little thin man with a bald head, very light twinkling eyes, and a retreating chin — sat awkwardly on the edge of a chair, holding his hat in his hand and coughing mildly into it now and then to relieve his embarrassment; while his spouse (dressed in silk-lined garments that rattled loudly at every movement) lolled on a sofa near by, with a number of cushions stuffed in at her back, and an ineffectual attempt at perfect ease in her manners. Mrs. McGuffin was possessed of generous proportions, a red, jolly-looking face, and three double chins; these, and the peculiar curve of her fat arms, with large pudgy hands stuffed into tight light gloves, and lying helplessly outspread, one on each of her knees, so appealed to Juanita's sense of the ridiculous that she nearly laughed aloud as she came forward to meet her friends. Sharley's high-bred air, the style with which she wore her shabby house gown, and Mrs.

Latimer's gentle, delicate loveliness occurred to her with a strange, unexpected force, almost as if they were entirely new to her observation.

There was an expression of distress in the little mother's blue eyes, a deeper color in her thin cheeks, and as soon as Mrs. McGuffin had warmly embraced and kissed Little John, and Mr. McGuffin had shaken her limply by the hand, the situation was explained.

"Juanita, my dear," said Mrs. Latimer, "your friends would like to have you visit them — have you go and stay with them for several days or a week. But — I am sorry to disappoint you" — she saw Juanie's face change, and looked appealingly up at her — "but I could not allow that; of course it is nothing personal toward Mr. and Mrs. — eh — McGuffin," the gentle eyes turned for a moment on them, "but I should not like to let you suspend your studies and leave my house, without a written communication to me from your father, to that effect. I should not like to take the responsibility of letting you go, without first hearing from Mr. Kyle himself that he would wish you to go. I hope you understand." Her glance included the McGuffins and Juanita, then turned and drew comfort and reassurance from Sharley's calm, approving eyes.

"Oh, it's only a good toime we'd be givin' Wannie," remarked Mrs. McGuffin loftily, while her husband coughed into his hat. "Shore, a few days away from the lessons'd be doin' her a wur-rld of good — an' mebbe a visit to a theyater

an' a dhrive in the par-rk, or a ride on horseback — eh?" giving Juanita, who sat beside her, a playful poke of her fat elbow.

Little John's eyes sparkled. "Oh, I'd love to go!" she cried eagerly. Running to Mrs. Latimer's side, she dropped on one knee and laid an arm across her lap. "Ah, let me go!" she urged persuasively. "I *know* daddy'll be willing — because he always lets me do just as I like. Ah, say 'yes'!"

Mrs. Latimer found it difficult to resist the coaxing black eyes; her fingers began fluttering nervously, her timid eyes turned appealingly to Sharley, who promptly came to the rescue.

"Mother has said that she could not consent to your going before hearing from your father, Juanita," remarked Sharley, in her cool, crisp tones. "So what gain is there in urging her?"

Little John sprang indignantly to her feet, her chin in the air, and glared at Sharley. "You're always interfering!" she declared. "I'll telegraph to daddy, that's what I'll do, and ask him. Then I'll go" — "in spite of all you people!" was on the tip of her tongue to be added, but a queer undefined feeling — was it loyalty? — kept the last words from being spoken before the strangers.

"Yes!" exclaimed Mrs. McGuffin loudly, rising from the sofa; "if it's a tilegram'll satisfy you, ye shall have it. Come on, pop, we'll dhrive to the hotel an' tilegraph John Kyle at once."

"I don't know but that daddy may be away — on a business trip. He said something about it in

his last letter," began Juanita dubiously. "And if he should n't answer, I 'd be *aw*fully disappointed"— she finished abruptly, then tossed her head, with an angry look at Sharley.

"Mistor McGuffin an' me 'll go an' tilegraph to Mistor Kyle 'bout Wannie," remarked "Dalia" consequentially to Mrs. Latimer. "An' John Kyle's tilegram 'll be comin' to you direct. An' I 'm that shore av his consint that I 'll be mentionin' now that me an' Lonzo 'll be down on Monday in the kerridge to carry the chile home wid us. It 's good-afternoon to yeze! Come, Dinnis." She made a funny bow, which was half a curtsy, and rustled out into the hall — not without a hasty glance around that was reminiscent of Katy; and "Mistor" McGuffin trotted at her heels, coughing gently into his hat. As he hitched himself over the threshold of the door, he turned and made a stiff, awkward inclination of his little body in the direction of Mrs. Latimer and Sharley. Not one syllable had he spoken since entering the room; but his wife suffered from no lack of speech.

"Bring all yer foine clo'es," she whispered loudly to Juanita, as they stood in the hall; "an' yer di'mon's. We 'll be havin' a grand toime! Lonzo is the b'y fer takin' you round — sez he to me the day: 'Maw, you bring her along, shore, an' we 'll give her the best toime she ever had in all her life. Don't ye come home widout her, maw,' sez he. Oh, you 'll come — you need n' be fearin'," with a knowing wag of her head. "That

tilegram 'll be here on Monday, widout fail. An' d' ye see the new kerridge, Wannie?" nudging Juanita forcibly. They were now at the open front door: and drawn up at the curb was a handsome clarence with a great deal of glass front, and a pair of large black horses. The harness glittered with silver, and the pompous coachman and footman wore long yellow overcoats ornamented with immense brass buttons, high silk hats, and the footman black and yellow top-boots. It was a very splendid turnout, and Mrs. McGuffin's heart swelled with the pride of ownership as she expatiated to Juanie on its merits and beauties.

"Ain't it *grand?*" she asked excitedly. "What wid thim rheumatic [pneumatic!] tires, an' the ashfall pavemints an' the cushi'ns soft as down — you 'd think ye was n't dhrivin' at all, but jus' flyin'. An' d' ye moind the lett'rin' on the dore? Dinnis was fer havin' a M — plain an' simple — there ain't no style about Dinnis — but Lonzo an' me shtuck it out — an' there 's the three letters. Foine they look, too, all rid, w'ite, an' blue — it 's patriotic we are, Lonzo sez. It 's always crackin' a joke Lon is! An' the coachman, Wannie, an' the futman — ain't they the illegant wans? An' always touchin' their hats ivery toime I spake to 'em — loike the grooms 'd be afther doin' in the ould counthry wid the quality. An' why should n't they, I 'd loike to be knowin'?" tossing her head, "wid Dinnis ownin' a silver moine; he 's aqual to anny juke on the other side."

"Miss Wannie, ye 'll be afther takin' cold out there on the shtoop widout yer hat," drawled Katy from the hall.

"Well, well, I must be aff — Dinnis is waitin'!" exclaimed Mrs. McGuffin hastily. "Don't ye be worryin', Wannie," with a wink; "that tilegram 'll be on han' Monday — rain or shine! Goo'by!" She swept hurriedly down the stoop, catching her gown up high, with both hands, that Katy Karney might have a good sight of her gorgeous red silk petticoat. The footman, who stood holding open the carriage door, touched his hat at her approach; and, fluttered by that mark of superiority and by the knowledge that critical Balleduggan eyes were upon her, "Dalia" McGuffin missed the step, plunged wildly forward, and fell ignominiously into the depths of the clarence, where "pop" sat patiently awaiting her.

"Dalia was bor-rn a fule, an' it 's a fule she 'll be ter the ind av the wur-rld," sententiously remarked Katy, with a widening of her complacent smile, as the carriage rolled away. "Come on in, Miss Wannie, darlint!"

CHAPTER VIII

HAVING A GOOD TIME

Mrs. McGuffin's words came true; sure enough, the telegram did arrive on Monday, and quite early in the morning at that. It was from Anaconda, and read as follows: —

Mrs. James Latimer: —

Let my daughter Juanita go and stay with my friends Mr. and Mrs. McGuffin, living in Fifth Avenue. And let her stay with them as long as she chooses. And oblige

John Kyle.

"Tell you! that message cost something — all the way from Montana!" Kittredge confided to Rach, later in the day, when the telegram had fallen under his notice. "But, of course," shrugging his shoulders, "money 's no object when you own a silver mine."

"D' you suppose that when he wants money he just goes and digs out dollars all ready made?" asked Rachel, in tones of awe. Dollars were not common in the little girl's experience, and her ideas of a silver mine were of the vaguest.

"Dig out dollars!" cried Kit, in great scorn.

"If you are n't the greatest little ninny!" then he rushed off to tell the joke to the rest of the family.

"Well," Mrs. Latimer said, letting the telegram fall into her lap, and looking regretfully at Sharley, "her father's word, of course, settles the question. We can make no further objection — though I *do* not care for those people. Still," hastily, fearful lest she might be judging harshly, "they may be very good and — eh — respectable. I would n't like to think otherwise. But — I should not wish Audrey to be intimate with them, and I am sorry Juanita is going to stay there."

"So am I," remarked Sharley, eyeing thoughtfully the yellow slip lying on her mother's lap. "I wish we had stipulated that Mr. Kyle's consent to Juanita's visit should reach you in his own handwriting" —

"Oh, my dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Latimer apprehensively, picking up the telegram with nervous, fluttering fingers. "Don't you think this came from Mr. Kyle? Do explain what you mean! Do you think any one else could have sent it? Tell me!"

"Of course Mr. Kyle must have sent the telegram," Sharley hastened to say soothingly. "We have not the slightest reason for thinking otherwise;" adding sharply to herself, with a little mental shake, "Sharley Latimer, you 've just *got* to stop being so mean and suspicious!"

Mrs. Latimer looked greatly relieved. "Then we had better send for Juanita and tell her of her father's consent," she said. "She will have some

preparations to make — and Mrs. — those friends of hers said they would be here early. They, at least she was very certain Mr. Kyle would give his consent ; was n't she ? " There was still a little anxiety in her glance.

" Well, they have all been such friends in Anaconda — I suppose that 's why she felt so sure. And, as you see, she was quite right," motioning toward the telegram, with a bright, reassuring smile. " Now I 'll call Juanita."

Little John came racing down from the schoolroom, in great glee. " You 've heard from daddy — and I 'm to go ! " she asserted, rather than asked, as she entered the sitting-room.

" Yes," the little mother said, giving her the telegram to read. " Your father says ' to stay as long as you choose,' but I am going to ask that your visit be not longer than a week. You know," appealingly, " there are lessons to be considered, and your music — and, beside, we shall miss you — dear child ! " She took Juanita's firm little hand into her frail, lingering clasp, looking up at the girl with loving eyes.

" Oh — then dad did n't go away as he intended," remarked Juanita. " A week ? Oh, all right," she assented brightly. " I can have heaps of fun in a week. Katy must pack my things right away — before the McGuffins come for me. Oh yes, I must take a trunk — there 'll be all my dresses to go in — and my habit — I 'm going to ride, you know. Oh, jolly ! " Her eyes sparkled. " I *love* to ride ! But I wish Audrey could go !

Could n't she? Oh, Mrs. McGuffin would n't mind if I brought ten people! It would be fine to have Aud along! *Could n't* she go?"

"Oh no — no, my dear, that is out of the question," said Mrs. Latimer hastily. "Audrey could not leave her studies. And you will not be alone — Katy will be with you."

"No, she won't," declared Juanita brusquely. "I 'm not going to take her — I would n't for *any*thing! She and Mrs. McGuffin would have a row, or a regular fight maybe, before the week was out. And I 'm not going to spoil my visit that way. You see," she went on, in rapid explanation, "Mrs. McGuffin and Katy come from the same place in Ireland — Bally something or other. Well, the McGuffins were *aw*fully poor — went hungry and barefoot — so did my daddy, many a time!" She threw up her chin, and looked sharply, imperiously, at her two listeners; then, as neither of them manifested the least surprise, she resumed her usual bearing and her story. "Now that they 're well off, Katy says that 'Dalia,'" Juanie gave the name a rich Irish flavor, with a mischievous glance at Mrs. Latimer, "puts on airs; and there 's no love lost between 'em. 'T was hard enough to keep the peace when we were all at the hotel in Anaconda, but now that the Macs have found silver on their ranch — and 've come to New York to live in such style — why Katy is simply rabid! I would n't take her to their house for a kingdom! Of course I 'll miss her — she helps me such a lot — but I could n't — would n't have

her along. There 'd surely be a quarrel — and, perhaps, something dreadful happen — for Katy just despises the whole family! One of the McGuffins' maids 'll have to look after my things and help me dress. Now I 'll go up and pick out the gowns I want to take. I 'll see you again — when I 'm going." With a little airy flirt of her fingers, she started toward the door, changed her mind, and, coming back, threw an arm across Mrs. Latimer's shoulders, and, stooping, rubbed her cheek caressingly against the little mother's pale face. Then she ran off upstairs.

Bursting into the schoolroom, she upset all law and order, while she gleefully told the news, in her delight even beaming on Miss Achison.

"Oh, Aud, I do wish you were going," she said. "That 's the one thing more I 'd like. We are to go riding and driving, and to the theatre and opera — oh no "— with a little shake of her head, "I don't want to go to the opera again, in a hurry — and maybe there 'll be a dance! — heaps of fun! I begged your mother to let you go with me — I just *begged* — but she would n't. Would n't you 've liked it?"

"Indeed I should," declared Audrey regretfully. "But, you see, I don't know your friends at all. I suppose that 's why mother did n't care to let me go. It 'll seem an awfully long week without you, Juan. Don't forget us."

"Forget you!" echoed Little John warmly. "Well, I just guess not! D' you suppose any old McGuffins could ever take your place with me?

Not much! And — you tell Teddy good-by for me — don't forget. I 'll be off in a little while now — they said they 'd be here about ten o 'clock. I guess I 'm going to have a splendid time — I 'll tell you all about it when I come home." She hugged and kissed Audrey good-by, and ran off, pitying her from the bottom of her heart for having to stay in the schoolroom and study, while she — Juanita — had such a glorious good time ahead of her.

Katy received the news with indignation and incredulity. "An' *yer* feyther 's willin' ter have ye goin' aff rampagin' round wid Dalia McGuffin an' that set?" she cried, her complacency lost in disbelief, her small eyes glittering. "Well! It 's mesilf 'd be always takin' John Kyle fer a sinsible man — not a fulish, empty gossoon ter be kerried away wid the loikes of thim McGuffins. 'T ain't loike 'im ter be doin' this way. An' wid that oidle, blarneyin' Lonzo hangin' round es full er airs an' mischief as a egg is full er meat! 'T ain't no place fer yez, Miss Wannie — at all, at all!"

But when she learned that she was not to accompany her nursling Katy's anger melted into copious tears, and she would have promised anything to be allowed to go. "Oh, the har-rd heart av ye, mavourneen, ter be goin' away fer a whole wake — an' willin' ter l'ave yer faithful, ould Ka-rty behind! It 's mesilf 'd niver be openin' me mouth ter that Dalia," she pleaded; "it 's niver a wur-rd out av me hid ye 'd be hearin', Miss Wannie darlint, if only ye 'll be takin' me alang — me that 's niver been par-rted from yeze" —

"Oh yes, you have," coolly interrupted Little John. "When I went to Colorado with daddy you did n't go — nor to Cheyenne. You 're just making a fuss now because it 's the McGuffins. And yet, you know very well," shaking a convicting forefinger at the weeping nurse, "that you 'd be *per*fectly miserable if you went. Mrs. McGuffin would be putting on airs and snubbing you, and you 'd be getting mad enough to knock her down and trample on her. And feeling the way you do, could you sit in her kitchen and eat her food? *I* know you!" another shake of the little brown finger. "There 'd be the biggest rumpus between you two before you had been in that house *one* day! Of course I 'd take your part — then there 'd be a grand row all round. No! I 'm going to have some fun — Oh!" suddenly throwing out her hands, and breaking into a joyous little laugh, "*what* a relief it 'll be from this dull hole! So," as suddenly returning to her subject, "this settles it, Katy Karney. You 're *not* going — d' you hear? Now go ahead and put the things into the trunk." And realizing the force of her nursling's remarks, though still sadly disconsolate, Katy obediently began the packing.

But when the clarence and the spanking horses had dashed up to the door, with Mrs. McGuffin seated off in fine style in the equipage, and Lonzo came running up the stoop arrayed in a tall silk hat, a pink shirt with diamond studs in the front, and very light trousers, turned up at the ankle, to escort his mother's guest to the carriage,

Juanita's leave-taking was a large drop of comfort in Katy's cup of woe. Last of all — after Mrs. Latimer and Audrey, after Agagio (who had been cruelly shut into the drawing-room, and was now on his hind legs at the window, bumping his black-and-white head against the glass in an endeavor to see what was going on outside) — last of all Little John bade her nurse good-by. "Come out here and see me off, Katy," she said. And there on the stoop, in full view of any who might choose to look, and especially of the haughty "Dalia," she put her arms around Katy's neck and hugged and kissed her with most unusual warmth. "Don't you worry, Katy," she whispered. "I 'll be all right, and I 'll bring you lots of pretty things when I come back."

Then Lonzo whisked her into the clarence, the door was slammed, the wheels went round, and Little John was off to have a good time.

"Now ain't this foine?" asked Mrs. McGuffin delightedly, as the carriage bowled along Fifth Avenue. "An' so the tilegram did come — eh, Wannie?" She nudged Juanita and chuckled. "I tould ye it would."

"And it did the business — for here you are," chimed in Lonzo with equal satisfaction.

"*I* did n't expect 't would come," said Juanita, laughing, too, for sheer enjoyment. Was there not a charming programme laid out for the day? — shopping first, and lunch at a grand hotel, then a drive in the park, and in the evening to the theatre! Who could help feeling happy! Her eyes

danced, and it looked as if the smiles had taken up an abiding-place round the corners of her usually grave little mouth. "I really did n't expect it," she repeated, "because in daddy's last letter he said he 'd very likely go on a long business trip — to the Pacific coast, I think. I thought he 'd be away from home."

"An' so he was!" declared Mrs. McGuffin, chuckling. With a large light-gloved hand on each knee, and an expression of triumph on her face, she leaned toward Juanita. "He *was* away — an' we knew it," she said impressively. "So what does we do — me an' Lon ain't easily beat; pop would n't j'ne us; he 's queer 'bout some things, pop is — what does we do but tilegraph to Dan Murphy (he 's Dinnis's pardner in Anaconda) an' tell him to tilegraph Mrs. Latimer, signin' 'John Kyle.' We tould 'im what to say. An' *that 's* how ye 're here now. Ain't that a cliver thrick?" She poked a facetious finger at Juanita, and she and Lonzo laughed loudly.

But Little John did not laugh. "O-o-h!" she exclaimed in utter astonishment, her mouth round as a button. She looked very sober. While she felt convinced that her father would have consented to her visiting the McGuffins, she felt equally certain that he would be very angry at this deception. Spoiled child as she undoubtedly was, John Kyle's daughter had long ago learned that untruthfulness — deceit — was the one thing her indulgent father would not tolerate, not even from her. "Oh, he 'll be mad! Dad will be *raving* when

he hears of it," she said bluntly, her black eyes opened wide, the look of surprise still on her face.

"An' mad is it yer sayin'!" exclaimed Mrs. McGuffin huffily, flouncing about on the clarence cushions. "An' ain't we afther doin' it to give you a good holiday — away from them stiff, shtuck-up people! If it 's mad yer feyther 'll be then we 'd better be turnin' round an' dhrivin' ye straight back. An'," changing her tone, "wid all the foine toimes Lon an' me 'd be plannin'— theyaters, dhrivin', an' a par-rty — to say nothin' of h'apes more! 'T is too bad!" She glanced slyly at Juanita to see the effect of these words. "P'r'aps Misthress Latimer 'd be lettin' you come anny way, if you besaached her," she suggested.

"Oh no, she would n't!" exclaimed Juanita, with unhappy conviction. "She and Sharley — all of 'em — will be mad, too. Oh no! they would n't let me come."

Mrs. McGuffin winked at Lonzo, who was looking quite solemn. "Well, then," she said, "maybe we 'd better turn back, as I said — so 's no wan 'll be gettin' mad. 'T is for ye to say the wur-rd, Wannie, an' Lonzo 'll tell the dhriver — the coachman I 'll be m'aning. Which 'ill it be?"

Little John could not answer at once. All her gayety had fled; she stared gloomily out of the carriage window. To go back and explain the deception to Mrs. Latimer was what she should do — what daddy would expect her to do. She knew that without any thinking over the matter. But how *could* she give up all those pleasures the

McGuffins had in store for her, and go back to that dull, stupid routine of lessons and going to bed at nine o'clock? She was deadly tired of the Latimers, she told herself, and she loved the theatre — she loved to dance —

Lonzo suddenly leaned forward and slapped his knee. "There! I *knew* there was something I wanted to tell you!" he exclaimed. "I come across a horse the other day that 's the identical image of your colt Terror — only it 's broke in for ridin', full of spirit, but gentle as a lamb. An' I 've engaged it for to-morrer aft'noon — you an' me 're to go ridin' in the Park. Oh!" with a look of dismay, "if you turn back — why, I s'pose I 'll have to countermand the order! The very born image of Terror — bright eyes, white spot in the middle of the forehead, an' everything!"

"Oh, the darling!" cried Little John rapturously. Away went her last scruple. "You need n't turn back," she announced to the waiting mother and son. "I 'll just have a good time — for *once* anyway."

"Sinsibul gyrl!" commended Mrs. McGuffin, patting Juanita's hand. "A bit av fun 'd niver be hurtin' you. An' John Kyle ain't the man I take 'im for to get mad wid them that 's pleasurin' his only darter."

Juanita held an entirely different opinion on the subject, but she was determined not to be controlled by it now, and with a decided, "Oh, don't let 's talk about that any more," she gave herself entirely up to the enjoyment of the visit.

And enjoy that day she did! — "doing" the shops, to which hitherto she had made but brief visits, for actual needs, with Audrey and Sharley; receiving expensive, often useless presents from Mrs. McGuffin, and presenting others of a like character, and spending her money lavishly on gifts for the Latimers and Katy; nor were Ann and the cook forgotten. Lunch at the large, fashionable hotel just suited her, with the seat by the window, in full view of all in the room, and of passers-by on the avenue, the admiring glances, the delicious food, Mrs. McGuffin's boisterous appreciation of all her remarks, and Lonzo's ever-ready compliments. The afternoon drive in the Park was another delightful experience, dressed in one of her "swellest" gowns, and receiving more appreciation from her hostess; more compliments from Lonzo. Then home, another grand toilet, dinner, and off to the theatre to see a most exciting play.

"I 've had a perfectly *splendid* time to-day! I only wish Aud could 've been along!" she thought as she got into bed that night, tired but happy. Then she fell asleep, and in her dreams saw her daddy's face, stern and disapproving, and behind him ranged all the Latimers, — Sharley, lofty and disgusted; the little mother and Audrey, sad over her deception; Ted, with the quizzical look in his blue-gray eyes, the surprised arch of his eyebrows which always had such weight with Juanie; and Kittredge, wearing a many-colored fool's cap of ice cream on his head, and staggering along under

two immense dishes of lobster à la Newberg, of which, with secret joy she knew, but a great pretense of regret, he insisted she should eat up every morsel!

Little John slept late the next morning, waking up tired, depressed, and rather cross. But there was more shopping to be done — Mr. McGuffin had bought tickets for a grand public ball to take place on Friday evening, in regard to which Mrs. Mac said, "Av coorse, we must all be goin'. 'T would never do to be missin' the ball av the s'ason." And Juanita declared she must have a new gown for the occasion. There was no time to be lost, so the shopping began immediately after breakfast. There were materials to be chosen, styles to be selected, directions to be given, and many other things to be seen to, all of which Juanie enjoyed. When the hour for the afternoon ride came and, mounted on Terror's "identical image," she cantered off to the Park with Lonzo, a gorgeous yellow-liveried groom at their back, the "young person from Anaconda" was in high good humor with herself and all the world. And this pleasant state of feeling lasted through the rest of the day, through a long dinner with some McGuffin friends (whom Juanita privately thought very "queer") and a second visit to the theatre.

But the following night, after another round of pleasure, after the play, and a rich, late supper, Little John reached her room in anything but an amiable frame of mind. She felt a great longing for the services of her faithful Katy, and imperi-

ously ordering the maid who had been waiting upon her from the room, began undressing herself. In a little fury of temper she threw her clothes about to right and left, and kicked off her shoes, sending them flying across the room. Teddy had been at the theatre. He must have come there from his bookkeeping, Juanita decided; and it looked as if he had been making some more money. He and Little John and her party had come face to face in the lobby of the Empire after the performance; but ignoring her quick exclamation of pleasure and her outstretched hand, Ted had politely lifted his hat, with the merest fraction of a smile, and gone his way. When they had met again, in the supper-room of the Waldorf, he had appeared perfectly oblivious of her presence, though Juanita felt certain he had seen her. He and Grey Anderson, who was with him, had taken seats at a farther table, with their backs to the McGuffin party, and had apparently never given them a glance.

Juanie had been first astonished, then indignant, that Teddy, whom she saw every day of her life and knew so well, who told her confidences that he did not share even with Sharley, and of whose liking and stanch good will she had felt so certain — that he should have snubbed her — yes, *snubbed* her! in this fashion! It was almost incredible. Why, she could n't have been more astonished, she told herself, if daddy himself had turned his back on her, — her indulgent, loving father! What *could* be the reason?

"Perhaps he knows about that telegram," she thought, standing before the dressing-glass, and staring into its depths with angry, unseeing eyes, "and thinks I'm *per*fectly horrid. *He* would n't 've done such a thing — nor Sharley, nor Audrey — oh no!" with withering sarcasm; "they're such *wonderfully* good creatures — they'd have jumped out of the carriage at once and just galloped away back. But I'm neither Sharley nor Audrey. I wanted a good time — and I'm not *one* bit sorry I'm here! There, now!" She pounded her small fist on the dressing-table; then caught up a brush and began haughtily whacking the bristles against her soft unoffending curls, under the delusion that she was brushing her hair for the night.

But presently the sore, hurt feeling in her heart grew too strong for any pride or stoicism to restrain. Dashing the brush down, she flew to the bed and throwing herself headlong upon it, burst into a violent fit of crying. She lay there a long while; and gradually her tears ceased, her sobs died away — one might almost have supposed she was asleep. But all at once she got up and marched over to the mirror — such a pale, heavy-eyed face it was that looked back at her; in self-pity several large tears welled up afresh and ran down her cheeks. Little John hastily brushed them away.

"I won't stay here the full week," she said tremulously, confidentially, as if making a compact with the forlorn, disheveled girl in the

mirror. "After I've been to the ball, I'll go back to the Latimers — the very next day — and tell 'em all about — the telegram — truly, I will! But I *could n't* lose the dancing, you know" — The tears came again, with a rush; and hastily turning out the light, Juanita ran and jumped into bed, where, almost as soon as her head touched the pillow, she was asleep.

CHAPTER IX

LITTLE JOHN'S DECISION

THE next morning, the fourth day of her stay at the McGuffins', Juanita woke late, to find a fierce storm in possession of the outer world. Rain, snow, and old Boreas were struggling with one another for supremacy. The outlook was gloomy, and within doors, she soon discovered, there was an equally heavy atmosphere of gloom, to which she speedily added her quota. The gayety and boisterous good humor which had been so conspicuous in the previous days of her visit seemed this morning to have deserted the family, and to have been replaced by moody silence and clouded faces.

After one or two feeble efforts, conversation died away, and Little John sat playing with the breakfast, for which she had no appetite. She felt languid, and still depressed by the emotion of the night before, and presently, when no effort was made for her entertainment, decidedly cross toward the three who sat at the table with her. She did wish Mrs. McGuffin would stop putting both her elbows on the table, she told herself fretfully, and drinking tea so loudly out of her saucer. A few months ago Juanita might have done these things herself; but she knew better now, and

noticed her hostess's lack of table manners with a proud consciousness of superiority.

Nothing that her friends did this morning pleased her. When Mrs. McGuffin, resplendent in a crimson, long-tailed, much-trimmed morning gown, and with her hair more than slightly disheveled, put her empty cup down hard in its saucer, thumped her fist on the table, and called loudly, "Hinkson! Ed'ard! — another cup o' tay!" and, folding her arms on the cloth, glared aggressively at the important-looking persons who figured as her butler and footman, Juanita grew indignant. A vision rose before her mind's eye of the Latimers' simple but quietly and nicely served breakfasts; of Sharley's low-voiced, pleasant-spoken orders to Ann — the little ones (even saucy Kittredge) were never anything but polite to the maid. "The idea of roaring at them that way!" she thought, "as if they were deaf!" Yet Mr. McGuffin's fervent "Thank ye, sur!" and uncomfortable, apologetic expression when his servants waited upon him, annoyed her as much as did his wife's overbearing manners. And had Lonzo eaten so much, devoted himself so to his plate, and tilted back his chair, and used a toothpick at the table on all the previous mornings of her stay? she wondered. Then why had n't she noticed it before? The majority of the men in Anaconda — John Kyle among the number — offended against polite laws in a like fashion (some of the women, too, in spite of their fine French gowns and diamonds); they

were not versed in what one of their number scornfully designated as table "epicac" (he meant etiquette). So Lonzo's behavior should not have been a surprise to Juanita. But between Anaconda and the girl had come some other, newer experiences, and a constant unconscious personal influence which was strongly dominating her. With natural instincts of refinement, Little John also possessed a large share of adaptability, that quality which is preëminently the American girl's heritage, and, all unwittingly, she had now a higher standard by which to judge the junior McGuffin. And he did not come up to it.

"Teddy 'd never 've done that — not even that horrid Kittredge," she thought, eyeing the unenlightened Lonzo with disgust, as he lay off, wielding his toothpick with dexterity and evident satisfaction, and swaying gently to and fro on the back legs of his chair.

"Afther lunch we 'll be goin' out to have you thry on yer ball dhress, Wannie; but this mornin' we 'll all be enj'yin' oursilves at home," announced Mrs. McGuffin briskly, when breakfast was over. "It 's somethin' perticler I 'll be doin' the day — I 've given or-rders," with a grandiloquent wave of her hand toward the room they had just left, where were Hinkson and the footman, "that I 'm not to be distarbed on anny account. So Lonzo an' you 'll have to be doin' the entertainin' av each other. I guess it 's neyther av you 'll be objectin' — eh?" With a sudden return of good humor,

she poked her elbow meaningly at Juanita, and swept off upstairs, chuckling, and stumbling several times over her long skirts as she went. Mr. McGuffin had disappeared.

"Let 's be playin' billiards," proposed Lonzo, who had grown very red at his mother's facetiæ. He was secretly delighted at the opportunity she had afforded him, though also determined, as he had confided to his maternal parent that very morning, before Juanita's appearance, that he "was n't goin' to make Lonzo McGuffin cheap to nobody," this state of feeling having been induced by Little John's indifferent, almost bored reception of his assiduous attentions the evening before. "She ain't goin' to walk over me — if she *is* Wannie Kyle!" he had declared with a good deal of warmth.

"No," said Little John brusquely, in reply to his invitation. Turning her back upon him, she began warming her hands at the radiator in the hall. "I don't feel like playing billiards." She had frowned heavily at her hostess's laughing remarks, and now the expression of her face was not that of the most amiable.

Lonzo felt his resolve not to cheapen himself beginning to ooze away. "Well, then, we 'll play pool," he said. "It 's real warm and cosy down in the billiard room — ever so much nicer 'n here. Say — will you?"

"No — don't want to!" jerked out Juanita.

"Ah, come on, now! Will you? No!" pleaded Lonzo, figuratively speaking, in the dust. "There 's lots of games down there — maw put

in a whole lot the day you come. Say — will you?"

"No — *no!* — I don't want to!" cried Juanie, with an impatient twist of her shoulders and an increased disgust for Lonzo's red, shining round face, so like his mother's, and the lock of oily brown hair that was rounded so low on his narrow forehead that it almost touched his eyebrows.

There was no mistaking her tone. A wave of color flooded young McGuffin's face, turning it a brilliant hue; the imploring expression died out of his light blue eyes, and they flashed. "Then what *do* you want?" he demanded in an indignant, injured tone. "I can't help it if it's rainin' so you can't go out. I did n't make the weath—"

Little John wheeled suddenly round on him. "I want — *you* to clear out and leave me alone!" she frankly informed him. "That's what I want. I can entertain myself — and I prefer to. Is that plain enough?"

"Well! if you ain't a terror!" as frankly retorted Lonzo, gazing at her with mingled feelings of disappointment and anger. Then, seeing no relenting in the big black eyes that coolly returned his gaze, he turned, and stamped wrathfully down the stairs to the billiard room. With a derisive little laugh, Juanita marched into the drawing-room and, sitting down at the piano, played and sang "Teresita Mia" with great spirit, and the loud pedal on.

She had gone over the song twice, and had just

swung herself round on the piano stool, wondering what next she should do for entertainment, when the portières parted and Mr. McGuffin's head was cautiously thrust in. "Oh," he said, as if relieved, "an' is it ye alone?" Then he came in, drawing the portières carefully together. "I 'm not likin' thim cyurt'ns," he remarked, shaking his head at them. "It 's a reg'lar doore I 'd be havin'." He wore his overcoat and hat; and the gloom of the day seemed reflected in his small, weather-beaten countenance.

Juanita had a liking for the meek little man, who was bullied by both wife and son, and she gave him a bright smile. "Oh, you 're not going out in the storm! Come sit down here and let 's talk about daddy and Anaconda," she said, pulling forward one of the elaborate blue satin and gold chairs which formed a part of the drawing-room furnishings.

Mr. McGuffin put out a hand to restrain her. "No, no!" he said hastily. "I 'd never be settin' on thim jimcrack cheers. An' as fer the shtorm," a faint smile widened his thin lips, a twinkle stole into his eyes, "it 's not to be mintioned wid shtorms I 've weathered manny an' manny a toime whin I was wur-rkin' on the road — brakin' shtones. Whisht!" He glanced cautiously about, and drew a little nearer to Juanita, dropping his voice. "It 's neyther Dalia nor Lonzo 'd be loikin' me to spake av it," he said. "They 're all for makin' a grand toime wid all the fixins'," he waved his hand toward the blue and gold chair, "an' the

foine house, an' thim — thim gintlemen — what Dalia 's got to be shtandin' round an' waitin' on us. But, Wannie, I 'm not takin' to it at all, at all — it 's no home to me. Well I moind when we 'd be livin' in a lil' two-room cabin — 't was down to Nixon's Crossin'," with a faint reminiscent smile, "an' w'ile Dalia 'd be doin' her washin' 'n' Lonzo 'd be crawlin' round — the lil' gossoon! — mesilf 'd be settin' on the door-shtone enj'yin' me pipe, afther a good day's wur-rk. Ah, thim was the happy days!" He sighed heavily. "An' now, wid all this grand place it 's out av the house I 'll be goin' to shmoke me pipe." He drew a short-stemmed, blackened clay pipe out of his overcoat pocket and gazed fondly at it.

"Oh, but that 's a shame!" exclaimed Little John warmly. "Why, daddy smokes all over our house at the ranch — wherever he pleases — and I 'm sure Lonzo 's forever with a cigarette in his mouth. You 've worked hard all your life, — dad 's often spoken of what a worker you were, — and now you ought to be taking a real rest and having some comfort. Could n't a nice little smoking-room be fixed up somewhere upstairs for you? I could do it — with Japanese rugs and things. There are plenty of rooms in the house that would do."

"Takin' a rest, did ye say?" repeated Mr. McGuffin in surprise. "Indade, an' it 's takin' wur-rk I 'd rayther be doin' — 't is the oidlin' round, wid nothin' to do, that 's jus' takin' the life out av me. Money 's a very good thing, — I 'm

not sayin' a wur-rd ag'inst it, — but, I 'll tell ye, Wannie," very earnestly, and waving a stumpy, not overclean forefinger at her, " 't is wur-rk that makes a man rale happy an' continted, — good, stiddy shtickin' to wur-rk day in 'n' day out. Dalia an' me 'd always be sayin', ' Oh, if we could be makin' a forchun, it 's the happiest p'aple in the wur-rld we 'd be.' Well, the forchun 's come an', if ye 'll belave it," he pushed back his hat, and stuck his hands into his trousers pockets, giving himself a most rakish appearance, " we ain't happy at all! There warn't a better-natured woman in the States than Dalia, always larfin' an' crackin' a joke, till she begin to put on shtyle. An' now, it 's jawin' an' scholdin' she is whinever I come near 'er — there 's no plazin' 'er. To get a bit av p'ace an' comfort," he looked timorously over his shoulder at the portières, as if " Dalia " might be behind them, and dropped his voice still lower, " it 's hirin' a shmall room down town I 've been. The janitor 's a very dacint man; he thinks I 'm no better off 'n he is," Mr. McGuffin gave a mild little chuckle, " an' it 's manny a pleasant talk we 'd be havin'. There 's Lonzo now, d' ye hear 'im knockin' thim balls around downsteers? — playin' billiards an' loafin' round the house whin 't is wur-rkin' he 'd oughter be. Whin *I* was young all the b'ys was for wur-rkin' an' glad to be at it, too! *Now*, it 's loafin' they 'd every wan of 'em be afther "—

" Oh, not all," broke in Juanita eagerly. " I know one boy — he 's twenty-one, and he 's work-

ing like a perfect slave! He goes to business very early in the mornings, works oh! *aw*fully hard all day — comes home, eats his dinner in the evenings, and races right straight off to learn horrid old bookkeeping! And he 's doing that every single day and night in the week except Saturday and Sunday. He is n't obliged to do this; I mean nobody makes him go, but he 's trying to work up to a better salary, so he can do lots more for his brothers and sisters."

"Ah! — *in*dade!" remarked Mr. McGuffin approvingly. "That 's the kind av a b'y I 'd be loikin' Lonzo to be. But he 'd rayther be spendin' out the money an' oidlin' round. Well!" with a heavy sigh, "as I 've said before, it 's not money that makes happiness. Now, I 'll be aff. Ye nade n't be tellin' Dalia where I 'm afther goin'." He looked anxiously at Little John, almost as if regretting his confidence.

"Oh, I 'll never say a word!" she assured him. And hastily buttoning up his overcoat, McGuffin senior took his departure. He stuck his head between the portières again to repeat warningly, "Now, moind!" then let himself noiselessly out of the front door; and Juanita saw him scudding down the street as fast as his thin little legs would carry him, with no umbrella over his head, and keeping well in toward the houses.

Though Little John had mentioned Teddy with such pride, she had by no means forgotten his cavalier treatment of her the evening before. As she stood gazing out at the storm, flattening her

small nose against the window pane and puzzling over his behavior, it entered her head for the first time that he might have objected to the McGuffins. "Well! — the idea!" she exclaimed in surprise; then she grew provoked. "*Well!*" putting her chin up in the air, "if he does n't think my friends good enough for him to be polite to — he can just leave us all alone. *I* don't care! The stuck-up thing! I guess we 're as good as he is!" She forgot her own criticism and disgust of the morning, and was ready to do battle for the McGuffin family on the spot.

At this auspicious moment Lonzo, who had got tired of knocking the billiard balls about alone, walked into the room, not at all sure of the reception he might receive.

But influenced by her indignation at the slight which she considered Teddy had offered to himself and his parents, Juanita, to Lonzo's joy, met him very graciously. All went smoothly for a while. The grand piano was opened, and, with unusual amiability, Juanita played accompaniments to the "coon" songs, which were the only kind that Lonzo delighted in. And when they tired of this, at his repeated, urgent entreaty, she consented to dance the bolero, while he sat and watched her, his small, pale eyes full of admiration.

Little John was far from feeling in a festive mood, but the soft Spanish music held a witchery for her, and she delighted in dancing. In a few minutes all the gloom of the day, all her perplexi-

ties and annoyances were forgotten, her sweet fresh young voice caroled out joyously, and she floated about the big room with the utmost enjoyment of her own motions. When at last she threw the mandolin aside, and sank breathless into a chair, her sparkling eyes, the rose-leaf color in her cheeks, and the happy curves of her little red mouth made her very unlike the girl who had looked so dolefully out at the storm a short while ago. "Oh, I enjoyed that!" she declared, glancing merrily up at her companion.

And then, in an evil moment, Lonzo forgot himself, and bending hurriedly forward kissed his mother's guest!

Quick and unexpected as was this demonstration, a lightning-like intuition had made Little John dodge, and the caress fell on her curls, somewhere in the neighborhood of her left ear. But what words can describe the tempest of fury, of outraged feeling that filled the girl's heart! In an instant she was on her feet — white, her eyes fairly blazing. "You HATEFUL *thing!*" she exclaimed, and boxed Lonzo's ears with all her might.

Juanita's hand stung, and the swift punishment made young McGuffin very angry. His face turned a dark mahogany color, and he shot furious glances at Juanita. "Oh, a 'hateful thing' is it?" he cried, his hand laid over his wounded ear. "Bet if that ugly, stuck-up, white-faced Latimer feller 'd done it you would n't 've called *him* that!"

Little John took a step forward; with clinched hands held rigidly down by her sides, her pointed chin in the air, she looked him full in the face until his light, shifting eyes fell under the blaze in her own. "Don't you dare say such a thing again!" she commanded, "or you'll be sorry for it! What? Teddy Latimer do what *you've* done? You don't know him!" A sudden emotion thrilled her heart and sent a little tremor into her voice, but it lasted only a minute. "He is n't your kind," she went on. "You're a mean, contemptible creature! and I'll *never* speak to you again's long as I live!" With that she turned and swept imperiously from the room, dashing the unoffending portières to right and left on their bar with a good deal of noise.

But out in the hall there came a rush of tears — a great, unexpected, overwhelming longing for Katy's love, for Audrey's sympathy, for Mrs. Latimer's gentle voice, for her dear old dog, Agagio! "I won't stay here *another* minute!" sobbed Juanita. "I don't care whether they like it or not — I'm going home!" She seemed to have entirely forgotten the dullness of the Latimer household, which had so tried her; her one thought now was to get "home" as quickly as possible. Racing upstairs, she rapped imperatively on Mrs. McGuffin's door. Her first knock receiving no attention, she pounded loudly and brought a high-keyed, irritable response in her hostess's voice.

"An' who's that makin' all that n'ise?" she demanded.

"It 's me — Juanie Kyle; and I *must* see you — now — right away!" cried Little John.

Her earnestness carried weight, for presently the door was unlocked and cautiously opened — just wide enough to allow Juanita to enter the room sidewise. For a minute or two after her entrance she stood silent with surprise. The lace curtains to the windows were drawn wide apart, so were the portières between the rooms, and tied up in big loops; the pictures and ornaments had all disappeared; the furniture was crowded together in one corner; the rugs were thrown into a heap in another corner; and, now that the door was relocked, in the middle of the floor stood Mrs. McGuffin, broom in hand. In place of the gorgeous, long-tailed house gown which had flourished at the breakfast-table, she wore a short, faded calico skirt and sack, the latter very loose, and open at the throat; her sleeves were rolled high above her elbows, giving free play to their owner's sturdy red arms; her ample form was guiltless of restraint of any kind; a towel served as a dust-cap, and on her feet were a pair of large, soft shoes, down at the heel, and of the kind commonly known as prunella.

Mrs. Mac looked warm but cheerful, and seeing the unmistakable astonishment in Juanita's eyes, proceeded to explain the situation.

"Me dear, thim maids niver clanes the rooms properly," she said confidentially, in a loud whisper, and taking an easy attitude, one fat arm akimbo, the other extended, grasping the handle of the

broom. "They 're thinkin' they know ev'rything, wid all the airs an' graces they 'd be always puttin' on; but it 's mesilf could be t'achin' 'em manny a wrinkle that 's worth l'arnin'. It 's in the ould counthry I was thrained; an' if I does say it as should n'," her small eyes alight with pride, "there ain't nobody can clane a place aqual to me. Look at thim panes," she pointed to the French plate of the windows; "on account av the shtorm I 'd not be touchin' the outside; but ain't that a beautiful shine I 've put on the inside? An' not a shpot er dust or a dhirty mark 'd ye be findin' in the length an' breadth av these two rooms! Not when Dalia McGuffin 's been to wur-rk!" The proud satisfaction in her voice was worth hearing; it impressed Little John.

"D' you like to do it?" she asked suddenly.

"Faith, an' I do that," confidentially admitted the mine owner's wife, drawing nearer. "An' it 's achin' I am sometimes to get hold av a broom, or to shtart in an' do a big washin' an' ironin'. Whin I see thim oidle, lazy sarvants playin' round — foolin' all day over a lil' bit av wur-rk as should n' last 'em one hour, it 's mesilf can hardly kape from snatchin' it out av their hands an' showin' 'em how to do it." Then her face changed. "You 'll not be sp'akin' av this, Wannie; I 'd not be wishin' ye to," she said, with a great assumption of dignity that did not agree with her costume, suddenly remembering her newly acquired wealth, and what was due to it. "That Frinch maid, Powleen — the haythenish name av her! — is a

sly one! She 's always hangin' round an' walkin' like a cat. I 'd not have her be knowin' I 'd been afther swaapin' the rooms for annything!"

"But she *will* know it; she 'll see how clean the rooms are," answered Juanita brusquely, adding, "and what if she should? Where 's the harm? Sharley sweeps; I 've seen her do it."

"Indade, an' she 'll not know it," asserted Mrs. McGuffin, ignoring the latter part of Little John's remarks. She chuckled. "It 's a smar-rt wan that 'll get ahead av me." Then she came very close to Juanie and whispered: "I 'll not be sp'ilin' the winders," she said, "but whin all the furnichur 's back in place, it 's mesilf 'll be shcatterin' some av the dust an' lint on the flure again. Then I 'll dhriss all up an' ring the bell, an' whin that Powleen comes I 'll be tellin' her to bring the broom an' swaape up the cyarpet. She 'll niver be dhramin' what I 'd be afther doin'. See? 'T ain't yisterday I was born! Eh?" poking Juanita facetiously, and pretending not to see the look of indignation on her expressive face. "Thin, afther lunch," pursued Mrs. McGuffin, "we 'll be goin' to the dhrissmaker's. An' if the coachman 's tellin' us the horses is too delikit to go out in the shtorm, we 'll tilegraph for a coach from the livery."

"Oh!" exclaimed Little John suddenly, "I came in to tell you that I 'm going home now — right away."

"Goin' away! — to the Latimers! — *Wannie* Kyle!" cried Mrs. McGuffin, leaning against the

wall for support, in her surprise. "An' what about the ball to-morrer night?"

Juanita started, hesitated. She had actually forgotten the ball! Then came the thought of dancing with Lonzo! "Ugh!" throwing out her hands in disgust. "I'm not going to the dressmaker's — I'm not going to the ball," she declared firmly. "Lonzo has been *dreadfully* rude to me — and I would n't stay here another hour for anything you could offer me. I came up to tell you — and now I'm going." She moved to the door and unlocked it, while her hostess stood, broom in hand, looking at her in open-mouthed dismay.

"Lonzo? — rude? — Why, Lon thinks the — sun rises and sets in you! — Rude? — Well!" came from Mrs. Mac's lips in disjointed sentences.

"Pooh!" Little John's chin went up scornfully. "Ask him — he can tell you about it. I'll not *ever* forgive him!" she said, then paused a minute in her flight. "But you've been kind to me, — thank you for it. Good-by!"

"But, Wannie, the shtorm!" reminded Mrs. McGuffin, dashing forward. But Juanita had disappeared, and Pauline's black-robed figure was approaching with swift and noiseless footsteps. Mrs. McGuffin remembered her curious attire and hastily withdrew, barely locking her door in time to bar out the French maid.

"Why Miss *Wannie!*" cried Ann, in astonishment, as she let that slender, snow-covered young

person into the hall, and divested her of her wraps. "Who 'd a thought of seeing you to-day! Yes 'm, Mrs. Latimer 's in her room, and Miss Sharley." And to the sitting-room hurriedly went Juanita.

"Why, here 's Juanita! And in such a storm!" exclaimed Sharley, as the girl rushed in; and Mrs. Latimer looked up in apprehension. "Something is wrong!" she said quickly. "What is it, dear child?" She held out her arms, and, with a glad, eager cry, Juanie ran into their embrace.

Sharley's presence was no restraint just then. Perfectly regardless of her calm, critical eyes, of her opinion, and still in the shelter of Mrs. Latimer's arms, Little John poured out the story of the counterfeit telegram; of how it came to her knowledge, and her decision in the carriage the day the McGuffins had taken her away with them. The little mother and Juanita grew quite excited during the recital, while Sharley, though indignant at the deceit which had been practiced upon them, tried, by her cool, almost laughing remarks, to keep the other two calm.

But presently, to her daughter's great surprise, Mrs. Latimer said, in her gentle, hesitating way: "Sharley, I hope you won't mind, but — I think I should like to — Well" — with an appealing expression in her eyes — "perhaps you had better leave us alone — just for a few minutes, dear."

Of course Sharley went, after a quick warning glance at Little John, which that young person understood and answered by a reassuring nod. So the two had the rest of their talk out, alone to-

gether. What was said on one side and on the other I do not feel at liberty to make public; but when, after a good while, Sharley knocked on the door and called in, "Mother mine, should n't Juanita go take off those damp clothes of hers?" and Mrs. Latimer said hurriedly, "Oh yes, my dear, I forgot; you must at least be damp after walking all the way home. Go — go at once!" Little John stood for a minute or two looking down at her with soft, shining eyes before she obeyed.

"Yes," she said, "I 'll write daddy this very afternoon, and tell him the *whole* thing — and — beg him to write me at once; so I 'll know very soon that he forgives me. He 'll be mad," with a positive little wag of her head, "I 'm sure of that; but he 'll forgive me, I 'm sure of that, too. I 'll go see Audrey for just a few minutes, then I 'll let Katy put me to bed. The idea of going to bed in the middle of the day!" she laughed. "I would n't 've believed that just having a good time could make a person feel so awfully tired! I *would* like to have gone to that ball," regretfully; "but there," throwing out her hands impulsively, "I could n't have stood those McGuffins another minute! Yes, I 'm coming, Sharley!" Suddenly she dropped on her knee, and catching Mrs. Latimer's hand in hers, kissed it with eager, honest, girlish warmth. "Oh, I *do* love you!" she exclaimed, and then rushed headlong from the room, past Sharley, who stood in the doorway.

A minute later Juanita's clear, ringing voice was

heard through the house, calling, "Agagio! Gag! Gag! Where are you? Here, boy!" as she raced upstairs.

Mrs. Latimer and Sharley looked at each other and smiled. The little mother leaned back on her pillows; tired, perhaps, but content. "Sharley," she said with conviction, "that girl has the making of a noble woman in her. I'm glad she is at home again."

"She certainly has a good deal of vitality," remarked Sharley, still smiling.

"Yes," assented her mother; then she said, persuasively, "Don't you think we might invite the Anderson girls and Grey, and Roger Burton, and a few others, and have a little dance to-morrow evening? Just a simple, impromptu affair, you know. I think we should give her a little more amusement, Sharley. We're pretty quiet here, I'm afraid, dear — and you and Audrey might enjoy some fun, too. What do you say?"

Sharley looked thoughtful, tapping her lips reflectively with a slender white forefinger. "Why, yes, mumsie, dear," she said presently, and bending down she arranged her mother's little white shawl with lingering, loving touches; "we can and we will have a dance. I'll write the notes of invitation and send them out at once."

CHAPTER X

THE PARTY

"YES," said Little John deliberately, "I had a row — oh no, I must n't say that!" she drew down the corners of her mouth. "I had a fuss with one of the McGuffins, and came straight home; and I 'm never going *there* again. Now you need n't think, Katy Karney, that I 'm going to tell you which of the family it was, or what the trouble was about, and every single item, for I simply won't. I 'm just sick and tired of the whole McGuffin tribe!" She grew very emphatic. "I don't want to talk of 'em or ever see them again!"

Katy's complacent smile widened with satisfaction; this last statement of Juanita's went far toward compensating for her disappointed curiosity. "Well," she remarked, wagging her head shrewdly, "you 'd niver be quar'lin' wid Dinnis, so it must be eather Dalia — Oi 'd not be wonderin' at it! — or that imperdent Lonzo. Oi 'm thinkin' it 's him." She shot a sharp glance at Juanita, to see the effect of her words.

But Little John bent hurriedly over Agagio, then sprang to her feet. "You can question and surmise all you please; you're *not* going to get anything out of me!" she declared, with a confi-

dent little smile. "Come on, Gagio; we'll go upstairs and visit Audrey. Come, old boy!" an invitation which Gag immediately accepted, and the two raced up to the attic, while Katy went on thoughtfully unpacking Juanita's trunk, which had just arrived from the McGuffins', and putting the various garments away in their places.

Katy had been very unhappy without her nursling, and overjoyed at her unexpected return. In the day and a half which Juanie had spent in bed, recovering from the late hours she had been keeping, Katy had hovered about her in loving devotion, and devoured with curiosity to learn every particular of the visit. Juanita had willingly given her a fluent description of the McGuffin house and household, and of all her gayeties, and had admitted that something disagreeable had occurred; but what that something was she absolutely refused to disclose — to Katy's intense disappointment. But Katy had her own and strong suspicions.

"It's that Lonzo!" she murmured, as she shook out and hung up her young mistress's gowns. "*Oi* could see what Dalia was afther — as if Miss Wannie'd be marryin' the loikes av him! Indade, an' she'd be lookin' higher 'n Lonzo McGuffin — she'd be takin' a gintleman!"

Meanwhile, in the attic room, the girls were amusing themselves with Agagio. Little John knelt before the terrier. "Now sit up, like a dear, smart, old doggie," she coaxed, "and show your auntie Audrey how *beau*tifully you can 'trust.'

Tha-at's a nice boy!" And rising to the occasion, Gag sat up very straight, assuming his own peculiar air of gentlemanly restraint, and trying with all the strength of his doggish will to ignore the choice morsel of cake which rested on the end of his nose, though his moist mouth gave evidence of his appreciation of its presence.

"Now don't you move too soon," warned Juanita, shaking her finger at him. Gagio sat as if carved out of stone; only his eyes showed life — rolling up at his mistress and sidewise at Audrey — full of wistfulness, and with just a gleam of mischief in them.

"Now!" said Little John slowly and impressively. "One — two — three!" Quick as a flash the cake was tossed high into the air, caught, and swallowed with one gulp! Then Agagio sat and gazed at the girls with an expression so benign, so bland and innocent, as to send them into shouts of laughter.

"He's just hoping we'll give him some more cake. Isn't he too cute for anything?" cried Juanita in delight.

"He's a dear!" declared Audrey enthusiastically. "Oh, make him show off again." So the terrier continued "trusting" until the supply of cake on hand was entirely exhausted. Then Little John dismissed him with a kiss on the forehead (which Gag acknowledged by a swift, ecstatic wipe of his tongue) and a peremptory, "There — now you've had enough! Go lie down! Charge!" and threw herself at full length on the Sorrento-

covered lounge. "Come over here, Aud, and sit down and let 's talk," she said.

"Oh, I can't," answered Audrey, who was bending over the bed, with her back to the lounge. There was a note of impatience or discouragement in her voice that brought Juanita very quickly to her side.

"What are you up to?" Juanie asked, looking curiously at the little heap of white material that lay under her friend's hands.

"Oh, it 's a waist I 'm trying to fix up to wear this evening. Sharley has lent me some lace to help out. But I can't do a *thing* with it — I 'm so stupid!" Audrey said disconsolately, as she spoke spreading out the waist for inspection.

Little John's sharp eyes saw at a glance that its best days were over. "I have a white waist that would *just* fit you," she began eagerly; then stopped short as a bright rush of color went over Audrey's fair face, and she looked up quickly, deprecatingly. "Oh, well, then — let 's see what we can do with this," finished Juanita. "Try it on. Perhaps I can arrange the lace."

Delighted to have her help, Audrey slipped on the white silk waist, and the two girls went and stood before the mirror, where various "effects" were tried, but they were not successful.

"It looks too stiff and home-made for anything!" declared Little John, with more truth than politeness, and thinking of the new, stylish garment hanging idle in her wardrobe.

Audrey's face grew long and doleful. "I

suppose I could wear my blue," she said dubiously. "But it's wool — and not one bit party-like" —

"Oh, I've got it — I've got it!" eagerly interrupted Juanita, with dancing eyes. "I've thought of a way — a fine way to fix it! Give me a pair of scissors — and a great lot of pins. Oh, I'll not cut the lace — don't be afraid! And you must n't even squint an eye in this direction until I tell you to. Go lie on the lounge, or read — till I call you."

Catching up a book obediently, Audrey (not without a misgiving or two) sat on the lounge and read, while Juanita retired to the bedside, from whence, presently, came the sound of snip! snip! as the sharp scissors did their work.

Silence reigned for quite a while. Audrey had grown interested in her story and forgotten all about the present difficulty, when she was aroused by a merry laugh, and there stood Little John beside her, holding up the white silk waist to view. But what a transformation had taken place!

"Oh, Juan!" exclaimed Audrey delightedly, springing to her feet, "how did you *ever* do it? — out of that old dowdy thing! Why, it is as stylish! — Perfectly lovely!"

"Oh, it just 'came' to me," Juanie said, with a pleased little laugh. "You know I plan lots of my dresses. Why, that Madame Labierre that's making my new gown — she'll wonder what ever has become of me! — told me I had splendid ideas. I can almost always tell, the moment I see a piece of cloth or any material, just how 't would look

made up, and what color to put with it. And there 's scarcely a hat I buy that I don't change or retrim it to suit myself. Well, I 'm awfully glad you like it!" gazing at the waist with satisfaction. "But it 's only caught together with pins, you know, and I 'm so afraid they 'll fall out. You hold the waist, Aud, and I 'll sew it."

"You are the *dear*est thing to take all this trouble for me!" declared Audrey warmly. Bending forward, she gave her friend a hearty kiss. "It 's too bad to set you to work — just as you come home, too!"

"Oh, *I* don't mind this. I don't call it work. I 'm enjoying it!" laughed Little John. "Why, I often and often change my hats and things *just* for the fun of doing it. Oh — why" — suddenly, with surprise. "Why, I declare! If that is n't like Mrs. McGuffin and the cleaning!"

Audrey's eyes asked the question her lips were too polite to utter, and presently, as they sat together on the edge of the bed, — one holding the renovated waist most gingerly, the other putting stitches into it with a needle that carried a very long thread, — Juanie related some of the incidents of her last day at the McGuffins'. Lonzo's offense was not mentioned, — the recollection made Little John too angry and ashamed to ever speak of it, — but the conversations with Mr. and Mrs. McGuffin were reproduced as nearly word for word as she could remember, dialect and all. With a spirit of mimicry, strong yet not unkind, dropping her needle, she sprang up and gave the meek, little

mine owner's attitude — overcoat pushed aside, hands in pockets, hat on the back of his head — and that of his wife, broom in hand. Both girls laughed heartily, but Juanita's face sobered as she dropped down on the side of the bed again.

"It all sounds very funny here, but it was n't really one bit funny when it happened," she said. "He looked so sad that I felt awfully sorry for him — but I *was* provoked with her. The idea of scattering that dust around — so deceitful! I almost wished Pauline would catch her at the cleaning. But do you know," wagging her little head reflectively, "though I never thought of it until just now, I should n't wonder if sweeping and cleaning had the same fascination for her that planning gowns and trimming hats have for me. I *love* to do them! But she need n't 've been so ashamed of people seeing her sweep — need she?"

"Well, I should say not!" exclaimed Audrey energetically. "Why, Sharley and I 've swept rooms in this house more times than I could count! Anyway, Sharl always takes entire care of mother's room, — Ann has such a lot to do, — and one day, when she was in the midst of a grand cleaning, who should come walking in but Mrs. Burton! It seems that Jamie had let her in, and what did he do but usher her right into mums's room, where Sharley and I were working away like beavers! — mother was in the drawing-room. Well, I got embarrassed, — you know what a *very* elegant and proper person Mrs. Burton is? — 't was only the second time she had called on us! And there

were Sharley and I in old gowns, with big aprons over them, and cheese-cloth dust-caps on our heads! But Sharl was just as cool and composed as if she 'd been in the drawing-room and in her best clothes. She took off her cap and stood chatting a minute or two with Mrs. Burton, in the easiest manner possible, then escorted her to where mother was, excused herself, and came back to me and the sweeping. No, indeed!" warmly, "there 's nothing to be ashamed of in good, honest work. I 'm sure Ted is doing his full share of it; so is Sharley — think of all she does in this house! and by and by I 'll begin my share — teaching! *We 're* not ashamed of working!" She finished with very rosy cheeks and an unusual, proud poise of the head that made Juanita pause in her stitching — needle held aloft — and gaze wonderingly at her.

"H'm!" she said; then, resuming her sewing, "But suppose you 've got lots of money — and don't need to work — what then? You don't think a person ought to be slaving from morning till night just for the sake of working, do you? Why, I know lots of people — real nice, *good* people, too, that don't do a thing but simply amuse themselves the whole time." She gave a knowing little nod which signified, "Contradict that, if you can!"

Audrey leaned forward to answer, and in her eagerness nearly dropped the white silk waist. "Miss Achison and I had such a nice talk about that the other day," she said, her sleepy eyes lighting up. "Oh, Juan, I wish you 'd let her be nice

to you — she and I do have the loveliest talks together! I'm sure you would enjoy them, too. Well, this week — one of the days you were away — we got on that very subject; and *she* says," Audrey gazed thoughtfully at the Winged Victory while she searched her memory for the exact sense of Miss Achison's remarks, "that everybody and everything in the world works — has some work to do. The trees have to do their share toward putting on their leaves; the flowers have to push their way through the ground; the birds and insects and lots of the animals have to find their own food, make their own homes. Now about people. As she said, where would the world be without the workers? — the artists, the sculptors, writers, singers, the great speakers and statesmen, the doctors, lawyers, inventors, architects — oh, I can't think of half! Then she spoke of how they must have worked, one after the other, to give us all the beautiful, useful, noble, comfortable things we enjoy! See my dear Victory over there? Some one worked hard over that to make it so noble. Miss Achison thinks that *every* one works, — the President, kings, queens, and even the very people you spoke of, that just devote themselves to having a good time. Don't they often have to exert themselves a great deal for their very amusements? They work solely for their own pleasure; but many others — a good many, she said — worked for the benefit of the rest of the world, — like Pasteur and Wagner, you know, — and found more happiness in that. She thinks that the more people have of money,

position, brains — even beauty, Juan — the greater is the responsibility upon them for work — you know — she means to use those gifts to help others. Well! seems to me I *am* making a long speech!" She laughed and looked with amused eyes at Little John.

But that young person did not smile back. "Goodness!" she exclaimed indignantly. "Well, if Miss Achison thinks I 'm going to have no fun at all, but just go poking around to give other people a good time, because dad has money — why, she 'll get most beautifully left — I mean," hastily correcting herself, "she 'll be most beautifully mistaken." She was pouting, but the soft black eyes that turned upon Audrey held in their depths a wistful, almost worried expression.

Perhaps Audrey guessed its meaning; at any rate, dropping the waist — and at a most critical moment, too — she laid both hands on Juanita's shoulders and gave her a vigorous squeeze. "You? *You* go through your life mean and selfish and idle, never thinking of anybody else? Why, Juanie Kyle! I know you better than that!" she exclaimed merrily, and yet with an undercurrent of earnestness that had its effect on her hearer.

"But I *do* love a good time," Little John said, a most unusual self-depreciation in her clear young voice. "I gave up the ball to come home; but," honestly, "I was n't well here before I began regretting it, — I don't mean regretting coming home, — but I kept thinking of all the fun I might

have had at the ball — of the dressing up for it, and the dancing and everything. I *could n't* be quiet the whole livelong time and poky like Sharl— like some people I know. I simply *could n't!* I 'm just delighted there 's going to be this party to-night!"

"So am I," agreed Audrey, "and particularly now that you 've made my old waist over into such a thing of beauty. You dear thing! And let me tell you something. I think Sharley likes a dance as well as you or I do. Sharl is quiet — you see, she has had such a lot of responsibility on account of mother's being so delicate — but she loves fun, too; now really she does."

Little John thought of the secret Sharley had confided to her, of which Audrey knew nothing, and a queer feeling came over her. It was a mingling of compelled admiration for Sharley's brave spirit and of such a rush of warm loving pity for Audrey, for Teddy, for the whole family, when the awful shadow which Sharley so dreaded should fall upon them, that a pain sprang into her throat, and sent the tears to the very edges of her eyes. "There!" she exclaimed, — she could hear the tremor in her own voice, — snapping her thread off after the last stitch had been set. Springing suddenly to her feet, she tossed the waist into Audrey's lap. "Guess it 's all right!" she said brusquely, and fled from the room, closely pursued by Agagio. The terrier had been curled up on the floor at her feet, dozing, and now, rudely awakened from his slumbers by his mistress's abrupt movement, he

arose in great haste and dashed after her, under the impression that he was being left behind.

But there were no traces of tears on Juanita's face later in the evening; indeed, it was a very radiant young person in white who walked into the drawing-room a while before the company began to assemble and offered to help.

There was a delightfully festive air about the house that evening which was quite unusual; Sharley and cook had been making cake which Kittredge confided to Rach "made your mouth water just to look at it;" and Jamie and Dorrie were thrown into a wild state of excitement by the arrival of the ice cream. It was with the utmost difficulty, between coaxing and driving, and only under a solemn promise of a generous share of the dainties being set aside for their delectation on the morrow, that Audrey was finally able to get the little ones off to bed. Rach, who for the first time was to participate for an hour or two in the gayeties, sat, in her best frock, on a chair in her mother's room, almost afraid to move lest she should crush or crease the crowning glory of her toilet — a wide blue sash, which had come down to her through the family from Sharley. Kittredge, however, confined himself to no particular spot, shedding the light of his presence freely upon every one, getting very much in the way, and making himself generally objectionable. He met Little John on the threshold of the drawing-room door. "Slight family fracas going on in there," he informed her with a grin, turning his

thumb over his shoulder. "Sharley's giving Ted rats for dropping his bookkeeping. Say — think you'll dance the bull-e-ro" (he would mispronounce the word to tease Juanita) "for us to-night in that gimini gown? 'T would be the best chance you ever had to appear in public — large audience, and plenty of 'bokays' handy to throw at you. Can't you be persuaded? Oh, *do!*"

But with her chin held high, and vouchsafing not a word in reply, Juanita marched past him into the drawing-room. The big room was cleared for dancing, all the chandeliers were lighted up, and Teddy was arranging a profusion of flowers in vases and bowls and distributing them about on mantelpiece and tables. Sharley stood in the middle of the floor looking at him, a perplexed, anxious expression in her eyes, and a tiny frown between her arched brown eyebrows.

"I know flowers are awfully expensive at this time of the year," she was saying very crisply; "entirely too expensive for you to be buying such a quantity. I think it is a wicked extravagance that you can't afford" —

"I *can* afford it, or I would n't have bought them," interrupted Ted angrily. "You think you know everything — but you don't. I guess I can spend my own money as I please, without asking your permission! And as for the bookkeeping — I'll go there or stay away, as I think best. You know very well, Sharley, that nothing makes me so mad as for you to put on that dictatorial tone — and yet you will do it!"

Sharley took a step forward, making a little impulsive gesture. "I don't mean to be cross or dictatorial, Ted," she said earnestly. "But I hate your having mysteries from me. It worries me! I know just how much money you have to spend — and when you do anything as extravagant as this," indicating the flower-filled vase in his hand, "why — I get afraid of your running into debt. This has just spoiled my evening!"

Ted set the vase down hard on the mantel and, going to Sharley's side, put his hand on her shoulder. He was frowning, but his voice was not unkind as he said decidedly: "Now see here, Sharl, just hold that imagination of yours in check, will you? The flowers — I wish I'd never seen 'em! — are paid for — and I didn't rob a bank to do it, either. So, now, stop your worrying."

"But where" — began Sharley, then she saw Juanita and paused abruptly. Ted wheeled round to learn the cause of her sudden silence, and as he beheld the slender white-robed figure, the mobile face, and soft black eyes of the "young savage," his own face changed. His frown and ill humor vanished, and he fairly beamed on her, coming forward with outstretched hands. "Oh, I'm awfully glad to see you!" he said in a low, eager voice. "I heard last night that you were home — but you've made yourself very scarce. We missed" —

But Little John pretended not to see the extended hands; she hardened her heart against

the Copperfield smile. With a cool "Ah, good-evening!" and an airy bow, she sailed by, and finding that Sharley had no need of assistance, sat down at the piano and began playing and singing her Spanish songs in a sweet, low undertone, while Teddy stood looking blankly after her.

Then Mrs. Latimer and Rach came into the drawing-room, and Audrey made her appearance looking very sweet in the white silk waist; then the guests commenced to arrive, and the party had begun. In the opinion of Kit and Rachel, however, this was not an accomplished fact until the refreshments were served.

The three Anderson girls came — pleasant, sensible, unaffected — and their brother Grey, an old young man who was getting bald at twenty-one! Karl Westcott and Frank Norton were there, too, and Roger Burton; the last, tall, dark-eyed, and full of vivacity, eager and delighted to render Sharley any attention, any service, that she would allow. These, with a few others, made up the "party," and as all were well acquainted — some old friends — there was little formality and much fun. Everybody contributed to the general entertainment — in the way of piano, banjo, and violin playing and in singing, and the dancing was kept up with great spirit and enjoyment, while the little mother lay back in her chair and chatted with Mrs. Burton and Colonel and Mrs. Anderson.

"Are n't you having a good time? Do you regret the ball now?" Audrey asked in a hurried undertone as she and Juanita met in a quadrille.

"Splendid!" was the prompt and satisfactory reply. "I've never thought once of that old ball!" and a glance at her happy face confirmed this statement. Though the company was not a large one, she had partners in plenty — sometimes two and three for a dance; every one was attentive and complimentary, and she particularly enjoyed snubbing Teddy. She refused all his invitations to dance, was always too deeply interested in some one else to pay any attention to his remarks, and never threw a glance in his direction — when there was any likelihood of his seeing her do it.

Ted appeared first surprised, then lofty and indifferent. But by and by, when all had marched down to the dining-room for cream and cake, Master Teddy saw the opportunity of an explanation, and forgetting all his loftiness and indifference, boldly seized it.

Escaping from the heated dining-room, some of the young people stood about in the wide hall, or sat on the stairs with their plates of cream, and talked and laughed as they ate.

Into an alcove in the wall, barely large enough for two, Audrey and Juanita had squeezed with their plates on their laps. Grey Anderson, Karl Westcott, and some others kept coming up for a word or two, and close by, flattening himself against the wall, was Teddy, plate in hand, and keeping a close eye on the girls. And presently, when Audrey went away with Karl, in response to a call from Sharley, he quickly and quietly slipped into the alcove beside Little John.

"Ah, don't go!" he urged, as she made a motion to rise; then, dropping his voice to an undertone, "What *have* I done to be treated so badly to-night? I thought we were firm, true friends. I have n't seen you but once in over a week, and yet you 've been so unkind — not a dance — not a word — not even a handshake. Explain, fair lady, I pray!" The tone and words were jesting, but the blue-gray eyes were very earnest, and so near to Juanie that she quite forgot all the sarcastic and dignified speeches she had planned for just such an occasion.

"I don't believe in 'friends' that blow hot and blow cold," she remarked, putting her little chin up in the air. "I have n't any use at all for them! D' you suppose," suddenly growing very angry, and letting all her dignity fly to the winds, "that *I* would 've walked past *you* with just a little snippy bow, and never said a word, and then *turned my back* on you?" Her tone was tragic.

Ted opened his eyes wide in surprise. "Why, that 's just exactly what you 've been doing to me the whole evening," he said plaintively, — "just snubbing me for all you 're worth! When did *I* ever treat you in such a manner, I 'd like to know?"

"Last Wednesday evening — at the Empire," cried Juanita promptly. "And at the Waldorf you turned your back right on me!" Her head was held high, with a great appearance of rigid pride, but Teddy's quick ear had caught the little quiver in her voice; his sharp vision saw the blur

across her black eyes, and knew why her lids drooped so suddenly over them.

Hastily he bent forward, shielding her in a way from the possible gaze of the bystanders. "Do you know why I did that?" he said. "If I had allowed myself to come up and speak to you I should most certainly have punched the head of that McGuffin cad, and then pitched him down the steps! He is the most insufferable ass!" Ted was getting excited. "How you could let him hang around you as he did, I can't understand! A common, low fellow!"

"H'm!" remarked Juanita, with great perversity, "you think that 's nice — to call my — friend — names, do you? But Lonzo would n't have treated me as you did. *He* would n't have turned his back on me — not if there had been half a dozen of you by. You may say what you please, but I can't forget it!"

"Little rat! Don't call him your friend!" cried Teddy almost fiercely; then suddenly, bending lower, he added eagerly, hurriedly: "Ah, Little John — if I were only not such an 'impecunious party' — without a cent" — He pulled himself up short, stood up, and in a voice which he strove to make calm and commonplace, said: "You have finished with your plate, I think. Allow me to take it away." Then he went off with it, while Juanita sat in the alcove, shrinking back, and wishing there was a curtain or something that she might draw between herself and the little merry laughing crowd around her.

By and by, when the party was over, the company gone, and Audrey and Juanie started to go upstairs to bed, Teddy came from the drawing-room, where he and Sharley had been turning out the lights.

"Good-night, Little John!" he said, looking up at her with his usual calm, kindly gaze as she leaned against the banister for a moment. "I 'm sorry I called your friend names; and I am more than sorry if I appeared to slight you that evening in the theatre. I had no such thought; I hope you will believe me. Now, have n't I eaten enough humble pie? Won't you forgive me?" smiling up at her. He did not offer his hand, nor did she put out hers. "Won't you?" he repeated, with his most winning Copperfield smile.

A sudden unaccountable shyness fell upon Little John. "Yes! — I forgive you!" she said hurriedly, and turning, ran upstairs so quickly that she entirely forgot to add "Good-night!"

CHAPTER XI

A GREAT DISASTER

"AUD! Audrey!" Little John sent her voice ahead of her as she ran up the attic stairs one afternoon. And almost before Audrey could answer she was in the room, breathless, smiling, radiant. "Oh, I've something *splendid* to tell you!" she exclaimed, dropping down on the improvised lounge.

"Get your breath first," advised Audrey, though all expectancy.

"Can't wait!" declared Juanita briefly, and forthwith dashed into her subject. "Letters from daddy — and he has forgiven me — I *knew* he would — dear, blessed old darling!" she said happily, if disjointedly. "But he's awfully mad with the McGuffins! He seems to think they did the whole thing — and of course they did, so far's the telegram was concerned; but they couldn't've made me go with them — unless I had chosen to, you know — so — I guess I'm as much to blame as they are — eh?" She looked inquiringly at her friend, and Audrey nodded. "I guess you are," she replied.

"Well, I suppose I'll have to explain again," remarked Juanita more connectedly. "I don't

want to lay eyes on any of that family again; but — I would n't like to have daddy down on them — I mean," with an impatient little twist of her shoulders, "angry with 'em. He and Mr. McGuffin 've been friends for — oh, for ages! and poor old 'Dinnis,'" she gave Katy's brogue to a nicety, "has so few friends! And I *know* he had n't a thing to do with the telegram. I 'll tell daddy the whole business — well, pretty nearly all," making a mental reservation in regard to Lonzo's offense. "And now for the most splendid part," her small face was wreathed in smiles: "daddy has written to say that — I am to take riding lessons — and — *you* with me! Yes!" as Audrey gave a little incredulous squeal of delight. "And your mother has agreed — actually! Oe-ee!" She sprang up and, catching Audrey round the waist, waltzed her about the big room, to the time of a gay, gasping, intermittent tune, which presently ended altogether, as they both sank in a breathless, happy heap upon the lounge.

"Oh, I 'm delighted!" cried Audrey, as soon as she could speak. "I 've always wanted to be able to ride — though I suppose the first thing I 'll do will be to shoot suddenly off the horse's back, and land on the ground! But I 'll go, all the same. Oh, how lovely! And when — how — where? Tell me all about it, do!"

"Why, the whole thing is settled," Little John joyfully informed her. "I don't know what daddy wrote, but your mother said 'yes' at *once;* and even Sharley did n't object. We 're to go on

Friday afternoons to Henderson's for our lessons — you and I and Miss Achison. It seems she can ride — I did n't know it before, did you?" Juanita was more impressed by the governess's proficiency in horsemanship than by all her cleverness as a linguist. "And just as soon as you are equal to it, we are to go on the road; you know, through the Park and along the Riverside. I guess Henderson can't teach *me* much," she threw her chin up proudly; "daddy says that Pedro knows more about horses and riding than any other man he ever met, and *he* taught me. Should n't wonder if I could show Mr. Henderson a trick or two worth learning. Oh, Aud, you 'll enjoy it! It 's delicious to feel the air blowing against your face as you fly along! Oh, I wish I could get that horse that looks like Terror! I 'll ask Henderson."

"Oh, but a habit! What 'll I do" — began Audrey.

But Juanita interrupted. "That 's *all* settled," she said, with a little convincing wave of her hand. "I 've got two — and you 're to have one. It 's all right — your mother said you could take it. It 's a dark blue — awfully stunning!" She did not mention that it was her new one. "And it 'll just fit you, I 'm sure. Come, let 's go down to my room and try it on now. And I 've two chimney-pot hats, so you can have one. Oh, I 'm just crazy for Friday to be here, are n't you? Come on!"

"Oh, Juan! you are the dearest, kindest, most

generous girl in the world!" declared Audrey, flying at her with a rapturous hug and kisses. Then, with their arms around each other's waists, girl-fashion, they went down to Little John's room to try on the riding habit and hat.

Mrs. Latimer and Sharley were also well pleased with the new arrangement. "She is a different temperament from you and Audrey," Mrs. Latimer was saying, as she and Sharley sat working at the usual weekly mending; "she is not so quiet — so contented. She craves amusement; it seems to be a requisite of her nature. And as that is so, she should have a certain amount of it. There is nothing derogatory to her in that," she went on, glancing up at Sharley — the gentle little mother, who always looked for the best in human nature — and always found it! "God surely means his children to enjoy the pleasant things that He has provided for them in this beautiful world — so long as pleasure-seeking does not become the aim and end of their existence. Juanita loves what she calls a 'good time,'" Mrs. Latimer smiled, "and I have been wondering lately how we could arrange to give her a little more amusement. Now, Mr. Kyle has kindly solved the difficulty. He has certainly been very liberal in his dealings with us. Juanita must inherit her generosity from her father! She has, of course, been very much indulged, and she has yet much to learn, but, do you know, Sharley, I feel more and more convinced, as time goes on and I become better acquainted with her, that

hers is a strong character — with qualities that, if developed, would make her a great comfort to her father, and, with her wealth, a blessing to the world! She enjoyed our little dance, did n't she? And Audrey, too, — her bright, happy face did me good — just to look at it! Oh, my dear," sadly, a deprecating expression in her eyes, "I 'm afraid that my continual ill health has given you a very sober girlhood!"

Sharley's quiet face lighted up. "Don't you worry about me, or any of us, mother mine," she said, with a bright smile. "In our own way, I fancy we all get as much satisfaction out of life as ever Juanita or any one else does — particularly now, that we have more money to live on; it 's *such* a comfort! Still, I 'm glad Mr. Kyle has included Audrey in the riding lessons; it was very kind of him, and I 'm sure she 'll enjoy herself. No," answering the question which she knew was hovering on her mother's lips, "I would not have cared for it for myself. I 'm not fond of horses — in the way of riding. To be perched up on the back of a horse would make me dreadfully nervous. I 'd have a most distressing conviction that the creature intended to throw me off. I am not anxious to become a horsewoman; Miss Achison can take my place, and welcome. I would much rather be here with you."

"Well, I have that feeling about horses, too," remarked Mrs. Latimer confidentially. "Your poor father used to try to laugh me out of it, but I could n't get over the fear. But Teddy loves

horses — I wish he could go now and then with the girls and Miss Achison — if only horse hire were not so expensive in New York."

"Oh no, it would n't do for Teddy to go along!" exclaimed Sharley impulsively. "You know, mumsie, Ted is n't a boy now, like Kittredge — he is nearing twenty-two."

In an instant Mrs. Latimer was alert, apprehensive; the color sprang into her thin cheeks; her fluttering fingers dropped the little frock she had been sewing on.

"Oh, my dear!" she exclaimed in alarm, "you don't think that Teddy is — is — paying her *attentions* — do you? Oh, I *should not* like that! Mr. Kyle has placed her under our care — Teddy should not even *think* of such a thing — not even if he were well off — while she is under my charge! And he is a poor struggling clerk — while she is a great heiress. Oh, I must have a talk with him about it. I could not allow any such behavior!" She was quite excited.

For a moment Sharley was speechless, filled with anger at her own thoughtlessness. "Sharley Latimer, I could beat you!" she declared inwardly; then she dropped her work and went and knelt by her mother's side. "Dearest mother," she said gently, gathering the hot little hands into her cool, firm clasp, and holding them against her breast, "that was a *very* silly remark of mine — like a good many others that you have heard me make, I am afraid. My tongue runs away with me sometimes. There is no cause for alarm;

Ted has n't the *slightest* idea of paying attentions to Juanita, except as he might to any girl friend of ours — in a pleasant, friendly way. He feels about her being here — under your charge, and so well off — just as you and I do; he has too strong a sense of honor," a little proudly here, "to look at the matter from any other point of view. I know how he feels about it — we had a talk on the subject the day after the dance. I fancied perhaps he was a little too attentive that evening, and I thought I 'd better warn him. He did n't get angry at all, but talked in the most sensible manner. There 's no danger there, mother. Anyway," said this astute sister, "while she 's very pretty, she is n't at all the sort of girl that would suit Ted. I only objected to his joining the riding party because — in the first place, he could n't afford it; and in the next, because it might be just as well for him not to. So, perhaps, you had better not say anything to him about the matter — any of it — don't you think so? He might think we had been talking him over. And you are satisfied with my explanation, are n't you, mother?"

One hand slipped out of Sharley's hold, and fell to smoothing her hair. "Yes, dear; and I 'm *so* relieved," replied the little mother; she looked more tranquil. "It would have been very difficult for me to speak to Teddy on such a subject — to thwart the dear boy — though, of course, — had there been any — feeling — on his part — I would have had to do it. It would have been my duty." She gave a sigh of relief. "Oh,

I *do* want my children to be good and noble and honorable — like their dear father — my beloved husband!" Then both her hands went out and rested on Sharley's shoulders. "You dear, good daughter!" she said lovingly. "What would I do without you, Sharl!"

Sharley's eyes were shining. "Oh," she whispered, — she could not trust her voice aloud, — "what would I do without *you* — my dear little mother!" A sudden wild terror seized her at the bare thought, her heart swelled, and the tears came perilously near to her eyes. "Oh, mumsie, give me some lovings!" she cried out, using the simple phrase of her childish days, when she wanted to be petted, and hiding her face in her mother's neck, while Mrs. Latimer's arms went close around her.

So it happened that Juanita and Audrey went riding under the chaperonage of Miss Achison, and without the companionship of Teddy. And greatly they enjoyed themselves, too. Friday came to be a gala-day with them; and two "smarter," more attractive young maidens than these, in their close-fitting habits and jaunty chimney-pot hats, it would have been hard to find anywhere. Beside the riding lessons, there were a few other gayeties now and then, — an informal "dove" lunch at the Andersons', a matinée with Mrs. Burton, and several Saturday afternoons at the Young People's Symphony concerts, — all of which Little John entered into with the full zest of her pleasure-loving nature. Of Teddy she did

not see a great deal these days. Between book-keeping and other engagements he seemed not to be at home as much as formerly, and there were no more little tête-à-têtes, no more confidences. Still when they met — at the table, in Mrs. Latimer's sitting-room, or for a few minutes in the drawing-room in the evenings — Ted was just as kind, as merry, and genial as ever; and very soon Juanita's unaccustomed shyness wore away. That evening of the dance, Teddy's eager voice, the look in his blue-gray eyes, were not forgotten, however, and many times she wondered what it was that he might have told her if — if he had not been an "impecunious party," as he so often called himself. But with all her wonderings she had no wish to ask an explanation. In fact, that would have been utterly impossible; for in a vague, unreasoning way, there had come to be two Teddys in her mind, — one the kindly, merry Copperfield, who was her constant companion and good friend, and the other that bright-eyed, eager, earnest, new Teddy, whose voice and glance had confused and filled her with such sudden shyness. Any conjectures, any wonderings about the new Teddy which she might have were kept to herself, and appeared not in the least to interfere with her usual good spirits or enjoyment of life.

Sitting curled up on the narrow window seat in the schoolroom, she and Agagio, who had immediately bounced up beside her, were deeply interested in the performances of two small boys on the roof of the opposite house, who were training

carrier-pigeons. The day had been a pleasant one. Lessons had gone satisfactorily, there had been a brisk walk on the avenue with Sharley and Audrey in the early spring afternoon, and then a merry romp with Audrey and Agagio in the schoolroom. Now Audrey had gone to give the children their dinner, and the terrier and his mistress were resting in the window seat, Juanie lazily waiting for Katy to come in search of her for the usual evening toilet. Heavy curtains hung before the bay window, shutting it off from the rest of the room; it was a cosy, quiet little nook, and as the gloom began to gather, Gag gave up his watch on the pigeons and settled down for a nap. With a cushion poked comfortably against her back, Little John fell into one of her rare reveries, which deepened until her long black lashes lay on her cheeks, and her curly head drooped against the window sill!

How long she slept she never knew; a voice, hoarse, sharp, familiar yet strange, came dimly to her consciousness, and partially aroused her: —

"Yes — I've been speculating for the last five or six months — small amounts — and I just doubled 'em *every* time — never lost once! I suppose that made me reckless — and then this chance came. Everybody on the street — all the fellows that know — said 't was the *surest* investment — safe as a rock — and *bound* to go up. You had to scramble round to get shares. I scraped together all I had — and plunked it right in. Twenty minutes after — those stocks went

down, and I was *ausgespielt!*" Could that rough, defiant voice be Teddy's? that harsh, unmirthful laugh?

"You'd think that was enough," went on the voice; "but I guess I was clean off my base — and no wonder, with the hooting and yelling — the awful excitement — pandemonium — there was in Wall Street to-day! You can't imagine what 't was like! I got crazy! When Grey Anderson offered to lend me some money to try my luck again — I took it. I borrowed from him — and I borrowed from Roger and Karl. I invested again — if I had won I'd have doubled my money — *doubled* it! But I did n't win — I lost — lost *every single cent!*"

The despair in his husky voice brought a quick lump into Little John's throat. She sat up and pushed aside the curtains. Yes, it was Teddy, — but white, wretched, with wild eyes, and a hard, drawn expression about his mouth — such a Teddy as Juanita had never seen before.

He sat at the table where the children usually studied, and near him, in a chair, was Sharley, every particle of color gone out of her face. "How much — do — you owe?" she asked, speaking very slowly to keep her voice steady.

Ted threw his arms out across the table, and bent forward, looking up at her with miserable, ashamed eyes. "I owe *six thousand dollars!*" he said. "More than I could earn in two years — even if I gave up every cent of my salary to it! Oh, Sharley!" he broke out vehemently, "why

don't you pitch into me and say all the mean, sharp things to me that I deserve? — tell me what a wretch and a fool I am? Why don't you remind me of father's dread and hatred of 'stock gambling' — of your warnings — of my obligations here at home? Say what you like — it could n't be worse than I feel!"

He waited a moment, his anxious, unhappy eyes fixed on Sharley; then, as she said not a word, he broke out eagerly, humbly, and yet with a note of irritation in his voice: "I knew you'd make a fuss about it — even if I was winning — so I would n't tell you — and I did n't half enjoy the money. I used to go off to theatres and operas and suppers — after bookkeeping hours — with Grey, and some of the other fellows — and treat 'em all round. But I did n't half enjoy it — I hated the deception — and I'd a thousand times rather have had you girls along. But you made such a row when I spent two cents more than you thought I should — that I did n't have the moral courage to tell you. Now that's the truth. But don't think I'm blaming you," he threw out his hand hastily, "for had you known — and had you scolded — implored — what you like — I know I'd still have kept on — till I fell neck and heels into a hole like this. Words don't always impress me. I'm one of the kind that's got to get hit *hard*, to make an impression — and I've got it now! — tell you! I'm hard hit! I know you think I'm a poor, weak, selfish wretch!" he cried out suddenly, "to have brought all this trouble on us! But

believe me, Sharley, it was n't for my own gain alone that I went into speculating. I thought I 'd make a big pile of money — a fortune, maybe — and put mums and you all into comfort. Oh, poor little mums! — for goodness' sake don't ever let *her* know! She 'd feel terribly — she 'd be — so *awfully* disappointed in me!" He covered his face with his hands and groaned.

Still Sharley said not a word; her face looked rigid, her eyes were cast down, her hands tightly clasped together in her lap. But Little John was on her feet, almost beyond the curtains, hesitating, eager, breathless.

"How will you — pay back — all that money?" Sharley asked presently, in the same slow, repressed voice.

Ted took his hands from his face. Every vestige of boyishness had vanished from it; 't was the haggard countenance of a man that looked across the table at his sister. "I have racked my brain to think where I could get the money," he said. "I thought of going to the president of our company — you know, O. T. — and telling him the whole business — and asking him to lend me the six thousand dollars, keeping back part of my salary each month until the whole was paid, with interest. 'T would take a good while — but he would n't lose a cent. But O. T.'s a queer duck — he might do it — and then again he might fly into a rage and just send me packing! I can't run any risks — I can't afford to lose my job — with all this other trouble. I *must* pay Grey

Anderson — he was n't very nice when he heard I 'd lost — says he must have his money! Perhaps Roger would wait — if I asked him" —

"Oh no! no!" exclaimed Sharley, a faint color coming into her white face.

"I could sell my watch — it 's the only thing of value I own — father's watch," began Ted; his voice shaking. "But that would n't bring mu—"

Then suddenly there was the swish of a skirt, a swift rush of feet, and Little John was beside the table, between the brother and sister, her cheeks rosy red from excitement and sleep, her eyes alight, her small grave mouth holding curves of the sweetest kindliness.

"Oh, Teddy! Teddy! let me gi— lend you that money!" she cried eagerly, persuasively. "Ah, Teddy, *please* let me do it!"

Her sudden appearance was a great surprise to the two, who had imagined themselves entirely alone. Ted sprang to his feet with a sharp exclamation, the blood dyeing his face scarlet, and Sharley turned angrily on Juanita.

"What!" she cried, and the tone of her voice made Little John color vividly, "have you been in here all this time, *listening* to what we have been saying to each other in the strictest confidence? Juanita! I am surprised!"

"I was asleep at first — then Teddy's voice woke me up!" exclaimed Juanita, her chin going up in the air, but too intent upon accomplishing her kindly purpose to get angry. "I suppose — well, I know — I ought to 've gone right away —

but I felt *so* sorry!" turning her big, soft, black eyes on the ashamed, shrinking figure of Ted — "and I wanted to ask you about — you know — about this money — so you see I could n't go. And," looking at Sharley, "you may be positive that I 'd never, *never* say one word about — this trouble — to a single creature! Now don't worry any longer," her eyes were back upon Ted, "about where you 'll get the money you want — the six thousand, I mean. I 've got lots of money of my own — my very own — in the bank in Anaconda, — oh, lots more than six thousand dollars. So I can let you have a check for the whole amount this very minute — if you 'll only let me. And you can take ages and ages to pay it back — for, you see, there 's no need of hurry — the money 'd only be lying idle in the bank. Ah, Teddy, let me! will you? Ah, *please!*" she pleaded. Going to where he stood, she laid her little brown hand on his sleeve, in her earnestness.

"But, Teddy, you could n't take it — you could n't do such a thing!" exclaimed Sharley vehemently, coming hastily forward.

"Oh, you keep still!" cried Little John, flirting her hand impatiently at her. Then to Ted, in the most coaxing, winning way: "You *will* take it — won't you, Teddy? We 're friends — you and I — real, true friends — and true friends are always the ones that one would like to have do things for one in trouble — are n't they? Yes — yes. Oh, you will," joyfully, — "you 'll let me lend it to you. I 'll go make out the check now!"

She ran to the door, but before she could open it, Ted got to her side.

He took her hand and held it laid out on his large palm, covered with his other hand. "Dear Little John," he said very earnestly, "I thank you with all my heart for your generous offer — you are indeed a true friend! But I could n't take your money — I could n't borrow money from you" —

"Oh! but Ted — Ted — what will you *do?*" broke in Juanita; her eyes were brimming with tears, her lips were quivering. "Oh, it is *mean* of you to refuse — you are all so horridly proud!"

"It is n't the sort of pride you think it is," answered Teddy with an effort, "and I cannot explain further. But one of these days you may understand" — he stopped for a minute, then went eagerly on: "I hope you will also realize how deeply I value your kindness! Don't worry about me, Little John — I don't deserve your sympathy — for my own folly has put me into this fix."

Juanita had the vaguest possible ideas as to the meaning of "speculating in stocks," but she would not allow her friend to depreciate himself. "Goodness me! you have n't committed a crime!" she declared stoutly. "And you're not going to invest — speculate — whatever it is — again — are you?" She made the remark in the tone of a statement rather than a question; then, drawing nearer and gazing reproachfully up at him, she added: "Oh, Teddy! — I 'm awfully, awfully sorry you won't let me help. *I* would n't 've treated you so!"

For one brief instant Ted looked down — down into the velvety depths of the black eyes uplifted to him before he answered. "Little John," he said impressively, almost solemnly, "I'll never do any more gambling in stocks — I promise you that. I've had a lesson that'll last me all my life. I was n't willing to work up to a good salary — I wanted to make a fortune at one swoop — and I've got the worst of it, that's all. I only wish I could have kept it to myself — but there had been so much deceit — I thought I'd better make a clean breast. I'm not worth your sympathy" — He stopped abruptly, stooped and gently kissed the small brown hand that lay on his palm, then escorted Little John to the door, shut it after her, and returned to his sister.

"I've made up my mind," he told her. "You say aunt Angela will be here to-morrow — I'll lay the whole story before her — and ask her to lend me the money. She'll be horrified, I know, and I'll get no end of a rowing, but I'll have to stand that — I deserve it — and more, too! I'll give her my share in the house and furniture as security — and regular interest on her money. Perhaps she'll open her heart and do it — I've never asked a favor of her in my life. But first I must get her to promise faithfully she'll never speak of it to mums. Poor little mother! I would n't have her know this for the world! She'd worry herself to death! Then — if aunt Gela will lend me the money — I must put my

nose down to the grindstone, and begin right away to save every cent I can, to pay her back."

"Ted," Sharley put out her hands to him, "that girl — Juanita — gave you more sympathy than I did — but" — her chin began to tremble nervously, her gray eyes filled with tears — "you *know* how I care! I was so shocked — so stunned — I'm so afraid of debt! — that I could n't — find words — to sympathize with you. But — if aunt Angela will lend you the money — I'll economize in every possible — way, in the house — so that you need n't give us — as much as you do now. That will leave more — toward paying the — debt!"

"No! no! *no!* — you will do nothing of the kind!" cried Ted vehemently. "You make me feel the meanest cur that ever stepped! What? — because I've been such a consummate ass as to throw away six thousand dollars, and to be up to the chin in debt — you are all to stint yourselves of the little you have — to help me get square again? No, you won't! I won't have it! Now just remember that, Sharl, — or there 'll be a big rumpus in the family! And as for the 'sympathy' part — you and I don't need words between us for that. Don't you suppose I know what a dear, faithful, reliable sister you 've been to me?"

He threw an arm across Sharley's shoulders, and drew her to him. "Cheer up, old girl!" he said encouragingly; then suddenly his head went down on Sharley's shoulder, and she felt the heavy sobs that shook him.

CHAPTER XII

WAYS AND MEANS

Miss Angela Latimer arrived from Philadelphia the following day, and paid her relatives in New York a visit of two days. It was late in the afternoon of her return home that Juanita met Teddy in the hall, as he let himself into the house with his latchkey.

"Wait a minute," he said; "I want to tell you something." He drew nearer to Little John and dropped his voice. "You've been so interested in my — unfortunate affairs — so very kind," he said, "that I thought you might like to know I've got that money. Aunt Angela has lent it to me; and I've just come from paying Grey Anderson all I owe him. To-morrow I'll settle with Roger and Karl. I am thankful to have that off my mind!" His tone indicated relief, but he looked pale and tired, and there were heavy black shadows under his eyes.

"Yes; but you'll have to pay your aunt back," Juanie reminded him. "And work like a slave to do it, too. Now, if you had let *me* lend it to you, you could've waited — oh, ages — years and years to repay it. But no!" She twisted her shoulders impatiently. "I think you people just

love the very hardest way of doing everything! You seem to think — all of you — that that is the proper way!"

"Little John," Teddy said quietly, "don't you remember what I told you the other afternoon? No matter what the circumstances — I *could n't* borrow money from you! Not because I object to being under obligation to you, as you suggested, for I know your noble, generous nature. And I can't tell you what your sympathy has been to me — the comfort — the help" — Ted's tone had grown earnest, warm — the soft, eager eyes gazing up at him, the interested little face, had upset his resolution; then he remembered his promise to Sharley, and paused abruptly, drawing a little apart from Juanita. "You are a true little friend," he finished; but something had gone out of his tone, and Little John's sharp ears — or perhaps it was some other sense of hers — noticed it.

"Ah, now, Teddy, don't get stiff and prim — like Sharley!" she begged. "If we are friends — no!" She stopped and threw back her head, looking up at Ted with a trustful, radiant little smile, "not if — but *because* we are friends, talk to me about yourself — tell me how you 'll manage to pay back this money. I want to hear everything! Won't it take a long time? Is n't it going to be awfully hard on you?"

"Yes, to your first question — with the closest saving, I can't do it under five or six, perhaps seven years," answered Ted. It seemed to Juanita that the tired lines in his face grew deeper as

he spoke. "As to your second question," he went on, "it will be hard — but no harder than I deserve."

Juanita took a step forward, both her hands out. "Now *don't* let that weigh on you," she urged. "You 've lost some money, but you have n't done anything dreadful; you 're going to pay back every penny. So don't get unhappy over it, Teddy."

But Ted turned sharply on her. "You say that because you don't know what you 're talking about. If you 're my true friend, you 'll make me keep up to high-water mark — not be willing to see me drop down — down — and then tell me — I 've done nothing dreadful!" He said this with a sternness that astonished Juanita. "Any one who borrows with no certainty of returning what he borrows is next door to a thief!" went on Ted in the same cold, stern voice. "Father used to say that, and it 's true! I knew I 'd lost all my own money — I knew I might lose any more I risked, and yet, without the slightest prospect of being able to make it good if I did lose, — I went ahead and borrowed that big sum of money! What d' you call that?" He was getting excited. "I never bothered my head about mums, or our narrow income, or my obligations here at home — I just sailed in regardless of anything or anybody but Theodore Latimer — and now, the whole family will have to suffer with me. *That's* the part that cuts me to the quick!" Ted clinched his hands; his voice got hoarse. "I shall con-

tinue to hand over my regular allowance to the home — I would n't dock that one penny to save my neck! But there are some other things — little comforts for mums — little treats now and then for the girls — and the youngsters — those 'll have to be stopped — dead short! D' you call that nothing? And mums — I feel myself a whited sepulchre before her — a living hypocrite! — the thing I despise most in all the world! A mean, selfish cur!" He put his elbows hastily on the newel post, and buried his face in his hands. Juanie had a strong suspicion that his eyes were brimful of tears.

Springing on the step, she laid her hand gently on Ted's straight, smooth, brown hair; she was deeply moved. "You are *not* a whited — whatever you call it — you 're *not* a hypocrite — nor a mean, selfish cur!" she protested vehemently. "You have done wrong — but you 're awfully sorry for it — you 'll never, *never* do it again — and you 're going to pay back every cent! What more could you do? Oh, Teddy — I 'm *so* sorry for you!" Her voice broke, and her round, smooth cheek brushed against the back of Ted's hand as she bent impulsively toward him, in her genuine, whole-hearted sympathy.

Eagerly Ted caught both her hands and held them — for one brief second — then hastily dropped them, took Juanita by the shoulders, and setting her down in the hall, ran swiftly past her up the stairs, without a word.

"O-o-oh!" exclaimed Little John in such pro-

found astonishment that her mouth kept the form of the letter O for a full minute.

But at the head of the stairs Ted paused in his flight, turned and came back. His face showed strong emotion, — it looked white and drawn, — but he made an attempt at his genial Copperfield smile. "Good-by, Little John — my loyal little friend — who still believes in me!" he said in a breathless, disjointed fashion, smiling down at her. "You know that I appreciate your sympathy — your faith in me — so I'll not try to say any more about it now. Excuse my leaving you so abruptly — and tell Sharley that I won't be down for dinner — will you? I've been feeling pretty seedy all day — guess I'll turn in right away — a good snooze will set me up fine for tomorrow. *Buenas noches*, Little John!" He waved his hand lightly to her, then went leaping up the steps, two at a time; and presently Juanita heard the door of his room slam heavily to behind him.

Then she went and stood in the window of the dimly lighted drawing-room, and tried to get her puzzled thoughts into some kind of order. But she did not succeed very well, and sat down to dinner silent and preoccupied, entirely forgetting Ted's message until Mrs. Latimer commented wonderingly on his absence; and Sharley hurriedly left the table and ran upstairs to see his condition for herself, and to satisfy her mother.

Mrs. Latimer and the younger children had no idea of Ted's misfortune, and he managed to keep

up his usual appearance and manner before the little mother; but Audrey knew all about the loss, as Juanita soon discovered. The two girls had many a talk together over it, in the privacy of their several apartments.

"Teddy does n't know of it, and Sharl does n't want him to — I guess he 'd be very mad if he knew — but she is economizing in every possible way she can — you know — without trespassing on anybody's rights," Audrey told Little John confidentially, one afternoon, as they two and Agagio were crowded together on the low, deep window seat in the attic room. The girls had grown very intimate in these last weeks — since that night of Ted's confession in the schoolroom. The knowledge of their common secret, and interest — for Juanita was very frank about her friendship for Teddy, so frank that even Sharley could not object — seemed to have drawn them much closer to one another.

"She has n't said so," went on Audrey; "you know Sharley does n't talk much beforehand of what she intends doing; but I fancy she 's going to wait until she gets a lot of money saved — of course that 'll take a good while — and then coax Ted to use it — you know — toward paying off that — awful debt. He is *so* particular since that time; he won't let Sharley make one penny's worth of difference in his expenses here at home — though he is actually walking up and down town these days to save car fare — so I 'm afraid he may not be willing to accept the money from

her. But all the same, I wish I could think of something to do to help him — something that would bring in some money."

"Oh yes!" exclaimed Little John eagerly; "something in which I could help — just you and I — and make a lot of money for Teddy." She knew from past experience that it was useless to offer of her wealth; and there was a certain satisfaction in the thought of working for her friend which appealed to her. "Can't you think of something? Now if we were only boys there'd be lots of ways of making money that we could find. I do wish I were a boy! Don't you?"

"No — not *one* bit!" Audrey declared unexpectedly, resting her fair head against the window sill and gazing thoughtfully off at the rose-tinted clouds in the bright west. "I did once, years ago — when I was a little girl — and papa heard me — and one day we — he and I — had a long talk about it. Let me see if I can remember." She closed her eyes for a few minutes. "Well, I can't remember everything — I was only about ten or eleven," she continued, "but, anyway, 't was like this: Father said it was something to be proud of — to be a girl — a woman, you know; that there was n't a more lovable creature in all the world — yes, I remember those words exactly;" Audrey sat up and repeated them, with the additional emphasis of an extended, slowly waving little forefinger, "that there was n't a more lovable creature in all the world than a sweet-natured, pure-hearted young girl! He said she need never

wish to be a boy, or a man, so as to accomplish great things — for that she had the strongest influence — the farthest reaching — and more power for good — or for evil — than any man ever could have. He said the women — and the girls — could raise or lower the tone of a whole nation by the way they influenced their brothers, friends, husbands, sons — and sweethearts — yes; he said sweethearts — right plain out — I remember the word. Father said a good queen could influence not only her own people, but other nations — I fancy he meant Queen Victoria — and that there was n't one position in life — from a servant to a queen — where a girl could n't do good, if she chose to exert her influence for that. Then he spoke of her," Audrey pointed to the Mater Dolorosa in its frame on the wall, and her voice dropped a little; "and of how God had honored all girls and women forever — by sending his Son into the world as He did — you know, letting Him be born of a woman — just like any little human baby! No; I 've *never* wished to be a man since then." She settled back against the window sill with eyes that were brighter and cheeks that were a good deal rosier than when she began her remarks.

Little John looked curiously at her, a thoughtful, inquiring expression in her black eyes. "H'm!" she said. Turning, she gazed at the sad, beautiful pictured face; then out at the radiant sky. "You do have such queer ideas!" she observed.

There was a short silence; then, presently, Juanita gave her head a little toss, as if throwing off some unwelcome thought, and brought her eyes back to Audrey's face. "Well," she said briskly, "can't you think of *any*thing that you and I might do to make some money for Ted?"

"Well — I was thinking" — Audrey hesitated — "perhaps I could make some pen-and-ink sketches — and take them to that picture dealer on the avenue. That man might buy them;" but she looked very dubious about it. "You know that's all I can do," deprecatingly, "except languages. And nobody would be willing to be taught languages by a schoolgirl."

"And where will I come in — with the pen-and-ink sketches?" demanded Little John, in an injured tone.

"Oh, you can be my model," Audrey told her. "You need n't turn up your nose, my lady," she said laughingly. "There 'll be work enough in that to suit you, I can tell you. You will be begging off before I am ready to let you go; see if you don't!"

"Aud! Aud! 'ere are you?" called Dorrie from somewhere on the attic stairs; and presently the little maid came trudging in, swinging her beloved one-armed old doll, Daffy, and looking very dejected. "I 'ants somebody to play wiv me," she announced.

"Oh-ee!" raising herself delightedly on her toes as she caught sight of the peacefully slumbering Agagio — who lifted one eyelid for a fleeting

glance at her; then with a groan of content fell asleep again. "Oneta" (this was Dorrie's rendering of Little John's Spanish name) "make Gag play 'Hunt Hanksif' wiv me? P'ease, Oneta!"

"All right! So he shall, Dorrie," agreed Agagio's mistress. "But first," rolling easily from the low window sill on to the floor, "you must come pull me up; after that we 'll have a jolly game. Come on, now, pull me up!"

"All 'ight!" cried Dorothy joyfully. This was a favorite frolic between the two; and, bracing her round, plump little legs firmly, Dorrie essayed to pull Juanita to her feet. Of course, at last, this was accomplished; then Audrey and Agagio were pressed into service, and presently the attic rung with shrieks of delighted laughter as the terrier "showed off" for the little girl's entertainment.

It was a couple of days after this, when Little John sat in her room changing and retrimming several of her hats, "just ter be kapin' her hand in," as Katy expressed it, that Audrey came running in, evidently very much excited over something, and holding a large paper-covered roll.

"Oh, Juan!" she exclaimed before she was well within the doorway; then stopped abruptly at sight of Katy Karney, sitting in a low chair, sewing. Her eyes telegraphed to Juanita: "I want to speak to you — and alone!"

Some weeks ago Little John would have said brusquely, domineeringly: "Katy, you just go out of the room — I want to speak to Audrey," and

without a thought or care as to whether she hurt her old nurse's feelings or not. But to-day she caught up a handful of crumpled ribbon, and threw it at Katy. "D' you suppose you could press that smooth for me, downstairs?" she asked.

"Sure that 'd be aisy wur-rk," Katy innocently assured her. Taking the ribbon, she trotted downstairs, leaving her nursling feeling rather proud of her unusual "tact" — and having smoothed the ribbon in five minutes Katy remained chatting with Ann and the cook for at least half an hour more. "It 's the lil' young things upsteers 'd be talkin' sacrets — Miss Wannie an' Miss Andrey — an' Oi 'd be afther givin' 'em toime," she informed her friends, with a slight widening of her complacent smile.

Meanwhile, the two upstairs *were* "talkin' sacrets." "Oh, Juan! Juan! what do you think has happened?" cried Audrey, clasping her hands with delight, roll and all, as soon as Katy's back was turned. "You could *never* guess! What we were talking about in the attic day before yesterday has actually come to pass!" Then as Juanita looked at her with puzzled eyes, she added in surprise: "Don't you remember? Work — to help Teddy."

"Oh yes! Why, of *course* I do!" cried Little John, all interest at once. "Oh, tell me all about it — quick!"

"Why, my dear, it came so easily, that I can hardly believe it 's not a dream," declared Audrey,

dropping into a chair close beside her friend, her sleepy blue eyes all alight. "You've met Miss Findler — mother's friend that edits a fashion magazine? Well, she called to see mums to-day — she has just gone — and while I was in the sitting-room she began telling mother and Sharley a long story about an artist who was to have made her some drawings for the next number of the magazine, and had disappointed her almost at the last moment — and she did n't know *where* to turn to find some one else. She had this big roll with her. It was too good a chance to be lost! I got up all my courage and waylaid Miss Findler in the hall. Sharley had gone back into mums's room for something, so I had a clear field. I have n't the slightest recollection of what I said — I was in such a hurry! But I know that I've got the work — I've got it! — I've got it!" She sprang up and waved the roll triumphantly over her head, laughing joyously.

"To be paid for the drawings?" Juanie asked breathlessly.

"Four single figures at three dollars each, and one large sketch — four figures in it — eight dollars for that. Twenty dollars in all! Think of it! Twenty dollars!"

"H'm! I don't think that's much," remarked Juanita, putting her chin up. "For all that work you should get fifty dollars at the very least."

Audrey laughed again. "You expect too much," she said merrily. "I'm satisfied; I only hope I can do the work to suit Miss Findler. If

I do — I fancy I may get some more. Here are the patterns we 're to follow." She threw the roll into Juanie's lap, but was too excited to settle down again into a chair; she kept walking about the room.

"I told Sharley all about it, after Miss Findler had gone," she continued, "and she 's willing I should 'make the attempt' — that 's the way she put it. She thinks it will be a failure — I can see that; but I don't think I shall fail — not if you 'll help me by being my model. Do you know" — she stopped. "It has just come back to me how pale and tired Sharley looked," she said uneasily. "I wonder if she is n't feeling well? She has a bad cough — Oh! I hope she is n't going to be ill! She 's never been ill that I can remember — always well — or acting as if she were — and doing all she can for us. Dear Sharl! She has been dreadfully worried over this — trouble — you know — Ted's."

"H'm! you do love her — don't you?" Juanita said curiously, and putting her question in the form of one making a positive statement.

"Love her!" echoed Audrey almost indignantly, "well, I should think I did! — we all love Sharley dearly! She 's been a dear, good sister to us. I 'd feel *awfully* — if she got ill."

"Oh, don't get all worked up — perhaps she was only tired," remarked Little John hastily, in a tone of encouragement. "You know she 's always pale. She has a cold now, but I don't think she feels sick — she seemed all right when

I saw her a couple of hours ago. She was giving Jamie hail Columbia" — Juanita made an impatient gesture and pulled down the corners of her little mouth. "She was giving Jamie a scolding," she said primly. Then she threw back her head with a derisive laugh. "*Well!*" she exclaimed, "if these are n't the dowdiest styles!" She had spread out the roll and was gazing with amusement and contempt at the miniature costumes, in paper, that were pinned on the sheet. "Why, I could design things a thousand times prettier than these!" she declared confidently. "These styles are as old as the hills! I suppose you 'll have to use 'em though — such a pity! Want to begin right away?"

"I suppose we 'd better — I promised them in a week. And you know we have only afternoons (barring out Fridays) and one Saturday," said Audrey. "And as I 'm new at the business, I may be slow. You 'll be glad of a good many rests, too, I can tell you," nodding her head wisely at her friend.

But Juanita scouted the idea of fatigue. "Just sitting still and having you sketch me!" she exclaimed incredulously. "I guess I 'm not so delicate as all that! Come on — we 'll go right up." Dropping her millinery, she ran up to the attic room with Audrey, and the new work began. Before this, however, Audrey raised a delicate question, which had to be settled at once and finally — the question of Juanita's accepting a share of the money to be paid for the drawings.

"You are going to do your share of the work, and you *should* take a share of the money," insisted Audrey, looking very red and uncomfortable.

"But Aud — this is different — it's not like a regular business arrangement," urged Little John, her voice full of entreaty, her black eyes most persuasive. "*I* want to help Teddy as well as you do — oh, let me! And let it be in my being the model — let that be my share. Ah, *please!*" And Audrey had to yield. Then the new business began; and before very long Juanita discovered that posing as a model was not such easy work as she had imagined.

"Let me flop, or I'll drop!" she exclaimed, inelegantly but with feeling, when the afternoon's work was over. Rushing to the Sorrento-covered lounge, she fell prone upon it, exhausted. "Talk about twenty dollars!" she remarked indignantly, from her lowly position; "I should receive fifty dollars, and you a hundred — nothing less! It's allowing an imposition to take less!"

But the next afternoon she was at her post again; and every afternoon until the drawings were completed. All was not plain sailing; there were times when the model grew impatient; even cross; and other times when the artist fell into a slough of despond over the quality of her work. But at last the drawings were finished, and, though by no means faultless, they possessed an unusual combination of daintiness and dash that lifted them above the average. Audrey had grave misgivings as to some of her "proportions" and "lines" and in regard to

the "reduction;" but Juanita believed, and boldly declared the drawings to be "beautiful!" "Guess that old magazine never had such good work before!" she asserted. Sharley smiled quietly and said nothing.

On account of the object for which the work was undertaken, it was not possible to tell Mrs. Latimer anything about it. And after some discussion, it was decided that Sharley should go with Audrey to deliver the drawings to Miss Findler on Saturday morning, when Sharley went out to market, Juanita readily agreeing to remain at home with the little mother until their return.

Just before the two girls left the house, when Audrey, in hat and coat, sat in the drawing-room with her precious roll of drawings, waiting for her sister, Little John came racing down the steps and into the room. "I'm so glad you haven't gone!" she exclaimed breathlessly. "See what I've got here" — she held out two miniature costumes, made up in colored tissue paper. "Aren't those *per*fectly stunning?" she asked, eyeing them with great pride. "I've made them up in a hurry — but all the same they're not bad now! One is after a French gown I've got; the other I designed entirely. Show 'em to — Miss Jigger — I can't remember her name — and see what she thinks of them. It certainly would be pleasanter for you to copy pretty things than ugly ones. 'By, Aud! I'll be wild to know how you get on." She knew Audrey was nervous, and gave her an unusually warm kiss and hug; then she ran off to sit and chat with Mrs. Latimer.

A couple of hours later the two girls returned. One glance at Audrey's radiant countenance dispelled any lurking doubts Juanita might have had. Rushing into the drawing-room, she pulled her friend in after her, and closed the door. "Well?" she said eagerly. "Tell me everything — quick — quick — *quick!*"

Audrey laughed. "Good fortune! good fortune!" she cried jubilantly. "Miss Findler took the drawings at once, Juan — here are the twenty dollars," drawing two crisp ten-dollar bills from her shabby little pocketbook. "And — what do you think?" She beamed upon the impatient Juanita. "She took both of your models — and paid for them — *fifteen dollars!* Here 't is." She drew out some more crisp bills and put them into Juanita's hand. "And she says she 'll pay you fifteen dollars every time you bring her two more patterns — models — as pretty and stylish as these first ones. Now what d' you say to *that?* And I 'm to make more drawings — for next month's magazine; but we need n't hurry over them — we have fully three weeks' time. Well — what do you say?"

Little John looked at the money lying on her slender palm, and a strange new feeling came into her heart. "*I* — actually — earned that money!" she said wonderingly. "What a lot! And I can make more" — she cried out in a sudden exultation — "I can make more as easy as — Oh, Aud! — is n't it perfectly *lovely!* What lots we 'll have for" — She broke into a gay, rollicking little

waltz-song, and catching Audrey round the waist, whirled her off. They careered wildly around the drawing-room, stumbling over footstools, bumping up against tables and cabinets, until at last they fell over on a lounge, where they lay holding on to each other, happy, breathless, laughing — until they nearly cried — for very joy and happiness.

CHAPTER XIII

SET ASIDE

"WHERE are you going?" Ted asked, putting out an arm to bar Sharley's passage to the door of the sitting-room. "You ought to be in bed — with that cough," he added, in an undertone, eyeing her anxiously.

Sharley forced a smile. "Don't worry about me," she said decidedly. "And please don't let mother get the idea that I am ill. I want to write a note and do one or two other things — and how could I here?" A slight impatient movement of her hand indicated the laughing, talkative group collected around the little mother. "Stay with mums until I come back, will you?" she asked. "I'll not be very long," and slipping past her brother, went upstairs to the schoolroom, where she shut herself in.

She took a seat at the table, arranged her paper, and lifted a pen to write her note, then was interrupted by a violent fit of coughing, which left her exhausted — with her arms thrown out across the table, her head down on them. "It is such a bother to write!" she thought wearily. "Perhaps by to-morrow this horrid pain in my side may be gone." "But suppose it should n't?" came

another thought; "there 's mother to be considered — 't would never do for her to be frightened." With a heavy sigh Sharley sat up again, and wrote her note. It was short: —

My dear Dr. Atkin, — Could you pay us a visit to-morrow — during the early afternoon? I have a cold which I am afraid needs looking after. I should not like mother to be alarmed, so please say nothing before her of this note or of any condition that you may find me in.

Yours sincerely,

Sharley Latimer.

Then Sharley opened her "house" books, which she had brought up with her, and began going over the weekly accounts. This was one of the "one or two other things" she had mentioned to Teddy. Formerly he had always helped her balance her accounts; but for the last few weeks — since Ted's great trouble — Sharley with one excuse and another had managed to do her figuring alone. Not for the world would she have had Ted know the rigid economy she was practicing — in ways which did not affect her mother's or Juanita's comfort; the last Sharley would have considered as downright dishonesty. But every penny was carefully looked after, with the end in view of one day getting Ted to let her add her savings toward paying back aunt Angela's loan. There was always the doubt of his allowing this, and the certainty of his being angry and hurt; but Sharley felt great

confidence in her own persuasive powers, and kept steadily to her purpose. In the meantime, however, it was advisable that Ted should not see the telltale accounts, so Sharley had brought the books up, to puzzle over them in the privacy of the schoolroom. But it was hard work this afternoon — with that sticking pain in her side, the heavy languor that oppressed her, and the teasing, constant cough that no lozenge or home remedy had been able to soothe.

"Oh, — I am so stupid!" she exclaimed wearily, when she had added up a column four times, and each time brought a different answer. "Oh, dear!" with sudden, unusual impatience she sent the pasteboard-covered account book flying across the table; and dropping her tired head on her hands, burst into a fit of crying. She felt cross, — unhappy — sick, unable to control herself; the tears came in a heavy rain, and it was a relief to give up all effort at self-restraint, and to sob aloud as a child might, in a passion of tears.

She did not hear the opening of the door, nor the footsteps that came swiftly and softly across the floor; she had no idea of any one's presence until Audrey's arm went across her shoulders and Audrey's voice, full of sympathy, eager, loving, cried: "Why Sharl! Sharl! My dear! — what *is* the matter?" Then, with a violent start, she turned, and, throwing her arms around the younger girl, buried her face in Audrey's shoulder, and sobbed convulsively.

Though very much alarmed — she had never seen calm, cool Sharley so moved — Audrey had the good sense to offer no remonstrance — not to try and check the storm. Without a word she stood holding her sister pressed close to her; gently, steadily stroking her hair.

Gradually Sharley's tears and heavy sobs ceased; presently, raising her head, she spoke, making a great effort for calmness: "I don't know what is the matter with me," she said, her lips and chin still trembling, "but I can't seem to control myself at all. I feel as if I could sit here and cry, cry, all night!" She stopped abruptly and bit her lip hard to keep from breaking into another paroxysm of sobbing. "Oh, Audrey, I *hope* I'm not going to be ill!" she cried, looking up piteously. "I feel so horrid — so perfectly unlike myself!" Then the tears would have their way, and dropping her head once more on Audrey's shoulder, Sharley had another fit of crying, mingled with sharp coughing.

"You've got a very bad cold — your head is so hot, and your hands are like ice," Audrey said presently, trying to speak naturally, though she was really frightened. "You are all tired out. Come lie down on the lounge in my room with some nice, soft cushions under your head and let me cover you up. It's quiet up there, and you could take a nice rest. Wouldn't you like that?" laying her cool cheek against Sharley's burning face.

"Yes, yes! — oh, perhaps a good, quiet sleep

would do me good." Sharley started up, then hesitated. "Oh, those accounts!" she said irritably, reaching a hand out to the books lying on the table. She began hastily gathering together her books and the writing material. "I must put these away carefully," she said, "until I feel equal to finishing the figuring — I could n't do it this evening." Then she added quickly, imperatively, "Remember, Audrey — if I should be ill — *never* let Ted see these accounts — he would feel so hurt — annoyed — that I should be saving for him! Take care of all these papers for me — and get Ann to post this note. Yes — I thought the doctor had better come. Don't be frightened," as she detected the flash of alarm in her sister's eyes. Audrey knew that careful Sharley must feel wretched indeed when she was willing to incur the expense of a visit from Dr. Atkin. "I thought he might be able to give me something that would ward off an attack of illness. There — now I 'll go upstairs and lie down — it was so noisy in mother's room that I could n't have stayed there. Oh, I 'll be so glad just to lie quietly — perhaps my cough won't trouble me so much then." She said nothing of the pain in her side.

"Ah, this is good!" she exclaimed, as her tired, aching head went down on the soft pillows and cushions that Audrey had hastily heaped up for her on the cot lounge, and her sister had tucked a warm, light quilt around her. "Perhaps I 'll be all right after I 've had a good sleep." Then she raised her head, and looking straight into

Audrey's eyes, added impressively: "But if I should n't, Audrey, — if I should be ill — remember that I would want Juanita to take care of — look after mums — until I get well. You could see to all the rest. Now remember!"

"Yes — very well, Sharl," Audrey said soothingly. "Now try and go to sleep, dearie. A nap may do you lots of good. I 'll bring you up some tea and toast after dinner, and I 'll explain to mother that you are lying down for" —

"Don't go making a fuss and telling everybody — and don't frighten mother — whatever you do, *don't* frighten mother! You know how — how nervous — she is!" interrupted Sharley, suddenly sitting up. Her cheeks were scarlet, her gray eyes wide, and brilliant with fever. "Treat it very lightly. Tell her I thought my headache might be helped by lying here for a while, where all was quiet. Tell her I 'll be down by and by — during the evening. Be sure you make her understand — that there 's nothing serious the matter with me — be sure of this, Audrey." Her tone was so anxious, so vehement, that Audrey hastily gave the promise. "And don't bring me anything to eat" — she made a wry face, and threw out her hands with a gesture of repugnance — "the mere thought of food makes me sick! U-u-h! I 'm so chilly!" Shivering, she cowered down among the cushions, and Audrey quickly pulled the coverings over her again. Then she turned the light low and ran downstairs to explain Sharley's absence from the dinner table.

Bound by her promise, she made as light of the matter as she could with truth, and succeeded in not arousing any serious misgivings in Mrs. Latimer's mind. But later, when bedtime arrived, and Sharley had not appeared in the sitting-room, it became no longer possible to keep the little mother in ignorance.

Colonel and Mrs. Anderson called during the evening, and while Mrs. Latimer was chatting with them, Audrey ran upstairs to look after her patient. Juanita went to the foot of the attic stairs with her — she would have gone farther, but Audrey was not sure that Sharley would care to have her.

"Don't look so worried, Aud," Little John told her kindly. "A good, quiet sleep does help a headache wonderfully. See if you don't find her ever so much better! Stop in my room when Sharley goes down, I want to show you something," she called, as Audrey ran up the steps.

But in a few minutes Audrey came flying down again, and into Juanita's room, with a white, frightened face. "Oh, come upstairs quickly!" she cried out. "Sharley looks so queer! and she 's talking so loudly! Oh, I 'm afraid she is *very* ill! And Ted is away — out — so is Ann — and Kit is in bed — he 's an awful sleepyhead! There 's nobody to send for the doctor. Oh, what shall we do!" She wrung her hands.

"Don't you be afraid — we 'll get a doctor, somehow, if she needs one," declared Juanita; and the two girls rushed upstairs, closely followed by

Katy, who had been listening to Audrey's tidings with the deepest interest.

Sharley had thrown aside the afghan and was sitting on the edge of the lounge talking loudly, and coughing, with her hand on her side. "Why did n't you wake me in time?" she demanded of Audrey. Her cheeks were flaming, her eyes bright; her breathing was labored. "Mother must be wondering where I 've gone to — nobody to help her to bed. Poor little mums! She 'll think I have neglected her! What are you doing here, Juanita?" Then her sharp tone changed; she beckoned to Juanie to come near. "If I get ill — have to go to bed — *you* will do what you can for mother?" she whispered entreatingly.

"Oh, in*deed* I will," Little John assured her, in the same low tone. "But you 'll be all right to-morrow, Sharley," she added encouragingly, then started as Sharley's hot hand touched hers. "Had n't you better go to bed up here?" she suggested. "Colonel and Mrs. Anderson are down in the sitting-room, and 't would be ever so much quieter up here."

"Yes; oh, Sharl, *do!*" urged Audrey, who realized that this was no ordinary cold. "I 'll help mother — I 'll sleep with her to-night — and by to-morrow you may feel very much better"—

"No! no!" cried Sharley restlessly. "I know just what to do for her — and you don't. She would get frightened to hear I was ill" — She paused abruptly and looked at the three who were gazing so anxiously at her. "If only this sharp

pain in my side would stop," she said piteously, "I 'd go right down to mother. But the steps are so long — so steep — and I 'm hot — and tired!" She sank sidewise on the pillows, and lay there with closed eyes.

"Tell me the doctor's name and address — quick!" whispered Juanita; and as Audrey hurriedly gave the information she dashed out of the room and down the stairs.

"Ye 'll be lettin' mesilf put yeze to bed, Miss Sharley," drawled Katy persuasively. "Sure 't is the best place fer ye. An' it 's a mustard plaister Oi 'll be clappin' on ye — ter aise the pain. Come," she drew Sharley gently to her feet, "come, let Ka-r-ty undhriss ye."

"Oh, Sharl, *don't* try to go down to mother while you feel so miserable," pleaded Audrey. "That would frighten her more than your sleeping up here would. I could explain to her; and I could sleep with her" —

"No! — let Juanita sleep with her," broke in Sharley, pausing in her journey across the floor under Katy's guidance. "Ask mother — to let her sleep with her — I know Juanita will like to care for her. You will have other — things to see to. *Not* you — but Juanita!"

Katy made Audrey a quick sign. "Av coorse Miss Wannie 'll be doin' it — an' gladly, too," she said soothingly. Then, in a rapid aside to Audrey: "Be afther runnin' to the kitchen an' mixin' a mustard plaister. Noner thim l'aves — but outer the regular genu*ine* shtuff. Quick wid ye!"

And Audrey flew to execute her bidding, stealing noiselessly past the half open door of the sitting-room.

Cook was not to be found, and Audrey was unfamiliar with the kitchen arrangements, so it took her some time to find the mustard and to get her plaster made. She was hurrying through the hall with it when footsteps behind her — cautious footsteps, like her own — made her look back — and there were Juanita and Dr. Atkin coming up the basement steps!

"How is she? You see I got him!" whispered Juanita, giving a triumphant little nod at the doctor; she wore her coat and hat.

"Oh, Juan! I'm so thankful!" cried Audrey; and such a rush of grateful love for her friend surged through her heart, that it fairly shone out of her sleepy eyes. "Come straight up to Sharley," she said eagerly to the doctor, "or" — hesitating, "should we tell mother, first?"

"No," Dr. Atkin decided, "I'll see Sharley first; then I can explain her condition to Mrs. Latimer." He was a gray-haired man, kind of face, and calm and decisive in manner. He had been a friend of Mr. Latimer, and the family physician for years, and Audrey knew that her mother felt great confidence in his judgment. So, without demur, she and Juanita led him up to the attic room, where Sharley lay tossing about and moaning with pain.

The doctor approved of what had been done. "Who is to be nurse — you?" he asked in an

aside, addressing Katy Karney, who was new to him in the family.

"It's mesilf'll be doin' me best," answered Katy with a complacent smile, and one of her best Balleduggan curtesies; meanwhile casting an interrogative glance at her young mistress out of the corner of her eye.

"Of course you will," eagerly responded Little John; and "*I'm* to be her nurse, too," asserted Audrey; the two remarks being made almost in the same breath.

Sharley had caught the word "nurse." "I'm not going to have any nurse. I'll not need one, doctor," she declared irritably, rolling her head restlessly on her pillow and trying to suppress the cough that racked her. "Audrey will look after me — I'll be up in a day or two. I don't want a nurse — d' you hear me, doctor?"

"Yes, I hear," Dr. Atkin said soothingly. He motioned to Katy to stay, then turned the two girls out of the room, and proceeded to make a diagnosis of Sharley's case.

Little John ran to her room and took off her coat and hat, then came back, bringing Agagio. "Poor old boy! — he was so lonely I had to bring him along," she said in apology. Then the three sat on the dimly lighted attic stairs, and as they waited for the doctor's decision Juanie told how she had managed to find him.

"All alone — in the evening — and not familiar with that part of the city — I don't see how you did it!" exclaimed Audrey; the girls were talking

in almost a whisper. "Oh, Juan!" she laid an arm affectionately over her friend's shoulders, and gave her a grateful squeeze; "it was splendid of you to do it — so noble and brave!"

"Why — that was n't anything wonderful!" declared Little John carelessly, though she blushed there in the dark, with honest enjoyment of Audrey's praise. "I was determined to find him, but — I was in such a hurry — I forgot to ask how to get to his office. So I interviewed the policeman that's 'most always around this corner of the avenue. And he was real kind — he put me in the right car and told the conductor what street to let me off at. I had told him I was going for the doctor for somebody who was very ill. So I had n't any trouble at all — the house is near the corner, you know. And I just caught Dr. Atkin — he was opening the front door of his house to go see somebody else. But, of course, when he heard, he came along with me. And I had left the basement door open, so we got in without ringing. If we had waited to get Kittredge up, we 'd have missed the doctor — sure!"

Audrey gave her another squeeze. "Did you feel afraid?" she asked, "and confused — being all alone?"

"Afraid?" echoed Little John, her chin going up. "Why, no — certainly not! Not a creature said a word to me — except the policeman. I marched along and minded my own business — and everybody else did the same. Of course," she admitted, "'t was n't so pleasant as having

some one with you to talk to, and I don't say I 'd want to travel around New York alone after dark *every* evening of my life. But it was n't so dreadful. And no bogy — as Katy calls it — ran off with me! So you must n't feel that I did anything very brave or difficult in going."

All the same, Audrey gave her another loving little squeeze. "Juan," she said presently, "I 'm afraid Sharley is very ill! Poor Sharl!" Her voice failed, and a hard lump sprang into her throat. "She 's been feeling miserable for two or three weeks — she ought to have given up long ago," went on Audrey, after a minute or two, "instead of going on slaving for us, as she has. I might 've done more in the house to help her — but I was too horridly lazy, and fond of my books! If she should — *die!* Oh, Juan! I would never, never forgive myself! And what would mother do without Sharley!" The tears were running fast down her cheeks, and Little John's eyes were wet, too. Until now she had never realized that she cared at all for Sharley; and when Audrey added brokenly, that Sharley had asked that she — Juanita — would fill her place with the little mother, the girl's heart swelled within her, and she could have wept aloud.

"I don't see why she should particularly want you to be with mother and not me," Audrey said in a tone of uneasy wonder, but not jealousy — her nature was too sweet and true to hold in it the quality of jealousy. "Oh, — unless it was because I 'm to see after the housekeeping — and the children, and she thought those would n't allow me time

to wait on mums, and to sit with her. Or — perhaps," humbly, "she thought — I would n't know how to take care of mother — I 'm so forgetful, you know. Oh, do you think so?" she looked at Juanita with big, wistful eyes — that view of the case added to her heartache.

"No, *indeed!*" cried Little John with such energy that Audrey said, "Sh!" and Agagio woke suddenly from his slumbers, got up, turned round and lay down again on his other side, with a wide yawn and a reproachful glance at his mistress. "I 'm sure — positive — that Sharley never had such a thought of you in her mind," went on Juanie warmly, utterly regardless of Gagio's disapproval. "She knew what a big handful you 'd have with the housekeeping and the children together — and you could n't do everything you know, Aud. I 'll do the best I can for your mother; I love her — but, goodness me! I 'm such a headlong, selfish thing! I only hope — Now, don't say a word, Audrey — I *am!*" She did love Mrs. Latimer, there could be no question about that, and gladly would she wait upon her, sit with her, give her, as far as she could, the tender, loving service that Sharley had freely rendered for so many years. The curtailing of her liberty, the confinement, the constant demand on her time and sympathy — no thought of these even occurred to Little John — but, oh! the responsibility! Sharley ill at the top of the house — Audrey fully occupied with the five hundred and one things that Sharley had carried so easily — Teddy

away all day — she — Juanita — would be a great deal alone with Mrs. Latimer during the days, and worst of all — entirely alone during the nights! Suppose — oh, *suppose!* — that that which Sharley had told her of should happen! Suppose the Summons should come to the little mother at some hour when just they two were alone together! — in the awful stillness of the night! At the thought her heart turned sick, and a cold perspiration broke out under the soft, silky black fringe of hair lying on her forehead. But it never once entered her mind to refuse to accept Sharley's charge. Instead, though her strong, little brown hands were clinched tight — to chase away that horrid frightened feeling, she would have said — she immediately began making arrangements for Agagio's comfort and well-being.

"You know, he can't come into the sitting-room, your mother is afraid of him," she said; "and he 'll be awfully lonesome without me or Katy; and you 'll be too busy to bother with him. I would n't have Kittredge do a *thing* for Gag — you know what a dreadful tease he is — he 'd spoil Gagio's temper in less than a week. But don't you think Jamie could take care of the dear old doggie? Jamie is a kind, gentle little fellow — he 'd be good to Gag; and so would Dorrie. Well, you tell them about it in the morning, will you, Aud? Nice old boy!" laying her face down on the terrier's black-and-white head; when he arose, and eagerly caressed her, after his fashion.

Then Dr. Atkin came out into the hall, and the

girls sprang up with beating hearts, to hear his verdict. He looked kindly at the anxious young faces. "Sharley is a pretty sick girl," he said, "but just at present not in imminent danger. Our great object now must be to prevent the disease from ever reaching that stage. I have put her in charge." He waved his hand toward the room he had just left, and his hearers understood that he meant Katy. "Of course, Audrey, you can help? but I find that this — er — person has had experience in nursing — and you would want Sharley to have the best care. So much depends on the nurse! Let very few people go into the room — none of the children — and don't let her be bothered with any housekeeping troubles — or troubles of any description. Now I'll go down and see Mrs. Latimer — and *I* will give her a daily bulletin of Sharley's condition — so see that no one carries a garbled account to her. Now, keep cheerful! Good-night!" He smiled kindly at them and went away.

When Little John walked into the sitting-room, some time later, the Andersons had gone and Dr. Atkin was making his adieux. Mrs. Latimer had been crying, and looked very sad; but the doctor had succeeded in inspiring her with confidence in Sharley's recovery.

"He has urged me not to go up to my dear child; in fact, he has absolutely forbidden my doing so," she told Juanita plaintively. "Going up a great many steps makes me feel very badly; and he says that Sharley begged I would not come up

— that I must keep well for her sake. But does n't it seem hard? my own dear child ill — and I cannot — must not — be with her!" Her hands were fluttering, her lips and chin a-tremble, but she tried hard to control herself. "I must not complain," she said, in her patient, gentle way; "I ought rather to feel very grateful to our heavenly Father for the prospect of my child's recovery. Oh, Juanita," she put out her nervous hands and Little John took them into her own clasp, kneeling down beside her, full of sympathy; "help me, dear, to pray that Sharley's life may be spared. She should have had medical care sooner — she has looked badly for a long time — but she would not give up. Sharley always thinks of everybody before she does of herself. Oh, she has been such a good, faithful — loving daughter to me!" The tears were very near her eyes, but Mrs. Latimer bravely kept them back. "And you are going to keep me company," she said presently, bending affectionately toward Juanita. "It is so good of you dear — while Audrey is so very occupied — but you must not neglect your studies — I feel as if this were an imposition" —

"Oh, don't say that," urged Juanie earnestly. "Have n't you often said you looked upon me as you did on Audrey — as one of your daughters? Now would n't a daughter be glad to do this for you? *I* am! And if I were ill, would n't you, every one, take care of me? Let me do for you as Sharley would — only, of course," a little unusual note of humbleness coming into her confi-

dent young voice, "I can't do things as well as she — though I'll try my best. So don't, please don't, *ever* say 'imposition' to me again." The soft black eyes, the winsome, mobile little face were irresistible.

Mrs. Latimer bent forward and kissed her. "You are a dear child!" she said lovingly.

Just then Ted's head appeared in the doorway, and he walked in, looking very tired. "Up so late as this?" he said, smiling down on the two. "Why, mums, you are getting very dissipated!" But the smile fled away, and a deep shadow of anxiety settled on his face as he heard of Sharley's illness.

"*I* have helped to bring this illness on — she 's been worrying over my affairs!" he said in a low, depressed voice, as he stood by the door bidding Juanita good-night. Then, before she could reply, "And you 're to stay with mums? Oh, but" — looking startled, the anxious lines deepening in his face — "this is n't fair to you — suppose — anything should happen! You should not be left here alone. *I* could stay with mother" —

"I want to stay — and I 'm going to!" Little John informed him very firmly. There was about her an odd little air of dignity that Ted admired.

"Are n't you afraid — sure?" he whispered.

"Afraid?" Her chin went up. She must keep the secret Sharley had intrusted to her, though she was longing to let Ted know she shared the weight of it with him. "I guess burglars would n't run off with me any more than they would with Shar-

ley. I 'm not afraid!" and she tossed her curly head.

So Ted had to be satisfied, and bidding her good-night, he went off upstairs to interview Katy, and take a look at Sharley. Then Mrs. Latimer and Juanita went to bed.

Up to this time of her life Juanita had rarely said a prayer in the mornings; at night it was usually her custom to kneel down for two or three minutes, and gabble through a few words, to which she gave no thought whatever. But to-night, when Mrs. Latimer knelt, Little John knelt, too; and the first glimmer of the real meaning and comfort of prayer came to her as she besought the Almighty, with all her heart, to keep the angel of death from the household that night — to spare Sharley and the little mother.

CHAPTER XIV

SOME HAPPENINGS AND TWO BIRTHDAYS

Snow lay on the ground, and March winds were holding high carnival when Sharley was put to bed ill, in Audrey's attic room; and long before she had regained strength enough to walk across the floor the trees in the little parks near by were in leaf, and the gay twitter of the birds was coming in through the open windows. It was a long illness, with pneumonia imminent for several weeks; and the return to health was, for the invalid, slow and tedious. And while Sharley lay tossing in semi-delirium, or quiet in the dull stupor of exhaustion, her duties were divided up, and the household adjusted itself to a new order of things.

At the end of the first week Juanita found Audrey nearly distracted over her accounts. "They will *not* come right!" she declared, half crying. "I 'm such a ninny at figures! And instead of saving any money, I know I 've gone over the amount Sharley allows each week for the table. Oh, dear! And cook is so disagreeable! — she just goes ahead and buys what she pleases — instead of letting me order for each day, as Sharley does. And I 'm afraid she 's extravagant! She must be — or why should we have spent more money than

usual this week? And Sharl may be ill for ever so long!" She stopped abruptly, and looked down at the rows of figures with a blur over her eyes that made them take very grotesque shapes.

"Now let's go over them together," suggested Little John kindly. She had had trials of her own in the past week; the responsibility of her new charge had weighed heavily; the constant necessity for cheerfulness and setting aside of self which the care of an invalid entails was very irksome, and tired her; the confinement and quiet of the sitting-room chafed her active, pleasure-loving nature; she missed Katy's services for herself, and at first was often awkward in those she undertook for Mrs. Latimer (the little mother had her trials, too, as may be imagined!). In fact, Juanie soon discovered that the position she had assumed was not an easy one to fill, and her heart, like Audrey's, had failed when she heard that Sharley's illness was likely to be a long one. But the "young savage" was plucky — not once had she thought of giving up her post; but a great respect for Sharley's executive ability had developed, and a determination to fulfill the trust committed to her in the very best way she was capable of. And it is significant that, in spite of all the worries and failures of that first week, when the end of it came, the affection between Mrs. Latimer and herself was not less, but stronger, of a more durable quality. "You have been a dear child to me this week," the little mother had said that Saturday afternoon. "I think we shall get along better and better as the days go on."

Juanita thought so, too, and those words, and the grateful glance Teddy had given her at the time, sent her upstairs to look for Audrey in the best of spirits.

"Perhaps you 've made a mistake," she suggested, taking a seat on the arm of the chair which, on schooldays, was Miss Achison's throne. Her arithmetical bump was much larger than was that of Audrey, and before long she got the accounts into a shape where the answers to the columns might be trusted.

"Oh, Juan! I 'm very, very much obliged!" Audrey told her, gratefully, when this result was attained. "But, you see, I *have* run over Sharley's amount. Now I 'll be that much short on next week's account. Still, I could make it up in some way — by economy, you know — if only cook were not so disagreeable! She treats me like a child — as if I could n't be trusted to do anything! The trouble is — well" — Audrey hesitated, coloring brightly, but honesty compelled the confession, "I forgot so many things the first few days that I suppose she got disgusted."

"H'm!" remarked Little John, gazing absently at her.

"You see," continued Audrey, in excuse, "it was all so new to me and such lots of things to remember — and, though Katy is such a splendid nurse, Sharley gets restless if I 'm not a good deal in the sick room; and, of course, I want to be there with her. Then there are the children to be seen to, except while they 're in school, which

is n't for very long, you know — and oh, a thousand and one things to look after! I can't imagine how Sharley *ever* does it all; and so easily, too! I no sooner get upstairs than I remember something downstairs that ought to be attended to that very minute, and down I trot, only to discover, too late, that there are ever so many things equally important still waiting upstairs to be done! Seems to me that I spend more than half my time just racing up and down the steps. What I should have done — with my studies besides — well, I could n't have done them — I simply could n't — that 's all! Does this sound as if I were grumbling?" she asked suddenly, anxiously. "Because I don't mean to grumble — how could I be so *mean* — when what I 'm doing is for my own dear sister! I would do twice as much, willingly, gladly, if only things would go right. I hate to have the accounts get behind — and we 've had lamb for dinner *three* times this week! That 's what Kittredge meant last evening when he went 'Ba-a!' at the table. *I* ordered it — I forgot all about the other two times, until the meat was in the house — and 't was too late then to make a change. And cook got so cross and impertinent! Oh, dear! I 'm not doing things well at all!" Audrey's voice failed; and she covered her face with her hands — utterly discouraged.

"Yes; and there 's the mending — lots of it — waiting. Your mother has been working away at it; but she can't do it all," Juanita reminded her. She had been following out a train of thought

during Audrey's long speech, and now, arriving at a decision, tossed her curly head, with one of her saucy gestures. "You 're awfully down in the dumps, Aud," she said briskly. "Cheer up; we 'll get through all right! Don't you worry! We 'll squelch Mrs. Cook, to begin with; and we 'll order the butcher to find us several new animals — so we can have a variety of meat to choose from. You 're not grumbling — you are just tired out — that 's what 's the matter! That makes you see everything through blue glasses, as Teddy says. Now I 'll tell you." She perched herself on the edge of the schoolroom table, and waved an impressive little finger at Audrey. "You 've done *beau*tifully this week! Yes, you have," as Audrey shook her head sadly. "Your mother said so just an hour or so ago — and Teddy did, too. Now! And they 've been at the dinners as well as that teasing Kittredge — don't you pay the slightest attention to what *he* says! But you will have to pitch into the mending next week — help your mother, you know. I 'd help, too, only that I 've no more idea of darning or mending than a cow has of — dancing a quadrille! But I *have* thought of something I could attend to for you that would give you more time for the mending. I 'll take over the housekeeping — there!" She gave Audrey a little coquettish tap on the shoulder, then sat back on the table, swinging her feet like a child, and gazing at her friend with a beaming countenance.

"You — keep house!" gasped Audrey, in blank astonishment. Then she laughed out. "Why,

Juan! you'd be worse at it than I — you don't know a thing about housekeeping. And, besides, there are your studies!" Then she tried to straighten her face, lest she should hurt Juanie's feelings. "'T was sweet of you to offer, but" —

But Little John was not at all offended; she was too bent on gaining her point. "Now, see here; don't you be so dead sure of my failure, Miss Audrey Latimer!" she interrupted, putting up her chin, but good-naturedly. "Did n't I keep house once on the ranch?" (She was careful not to mention for how long!) "And with a Chinese cook, too! Why, your cook is like an angel — after him! Guess I know a good deal more than you think! And as for my lessons — I could go on as I'm doing them now — study in the sitting-room, then go upstairs to Miss Achison for recitations. H'm! I'm really doing better than when I was in the schoolroom all the time; for your mother helps me study; and she is so patient and explains so beautifully, that I catch on — ah!" twisting her shoulders impatiently, "I understand — twice as quickly as with your wonderful governess. So — then it's all settled," she asserted boldly. "I'll take over the housekeeping, beginning — this is Saturday afternoon, well — day after to-morrow — Monday. That'll leave you more time to see to the mending and the other things. Maybe you could get a chance, too, to look at your German and French." Cunning Little John! She knew what this meant to her student friend.

Audrey wavered. "Then I could do my sewing while I sit with Sharl; and stay longer with her, while Katy takes a rest," she considered. "Oh, that reminds me! Do you know that Ted has been sitting up for hours every night with Sharley?" Then, as Juanita bent eagerly forward: "Don't breathe it to mums — he does n't want her to know; he thinks none of us know it. Katy let it out to me this morning. He kneels beside Sharl, and rubs her arms and across her shoulders until those paroxysms of coughing cease; and sometimes she falls asleep. He sends Katy away to lie down while he is there. Is n't that just like Ted? With all he has to do — business, and besides teaching that young fellow bookkeeping, to make some money. Is n't he a dear, thoughtful boy? I thought we might get a nurse to relieve Katy, — I wanted to speak to Ted about it, — but Katy would n't hear of my doing it. She fairly begged that I would n't — and Sharley gets so excited if a word is said of any such thing. Oh, Juan! I feel as if we were imposing awfully on you — to give up your maid to be nurse to Sharley — and you to be sleeping with mother, and doing all sorts of things for her the whole time! I 'm sure," in a tone of despair, "I don't know what your father 'll say to it all!"

"Now that 's all nonsense!" cried Juanita energetically, thumping her little fist down on the table. "All rot and poppicock! Do stop talking such rubbish! Why, Katy is enjoying herself immensely — she just loves to take care of sick

people; and she had n't half enough to do before. Don't you fret yourself about her — she 'll let you know fast enough if she 's tired. And as to mums," once in a while, when talking to Audrey, of her mother, Juanita would use the home name for the little mother, though, instinctively, she would not have done this to Sharley, — "why, I love her — and I love to be able to do anything for her. Now, Aud," bending forward coaxingly, entreatingly, "if I were sick or in any trouble, would n't you all — and you particularly — put yourself to the greatest trouble — do *every*thing in the world for me? Would n't you, now? Ah," as Audrey made a quick, eager gesture of assent, "I knew it! Now let me do to you as you would do to me were the case reversed — *I'd* let you, quick as a flash! That 's the Golden Rule, you know, only changed round a little. Yes — yes — yes, yes! I've settled it. Oh, I shall like it! I'll make Mrs. Cook and Ann walk Spanish! You 'll just see how meek they 'll get! A week? Oh, nonsense!"

"Oh yes, Juan; please — I 'd rather you would only do it for a week," begged Audrey, half ashamed of yielding. "I suppose — perhaps I ought n't to let you. I wonder if Sharley" —

"Well, all right, then — we 'll say for a week," hastily admitted Little John. "And if I get along nicely (I will, by hook or by crook," she added mentally), "then you 'll have to let me keep right on. Now, while we have a few minutes together, tell me how you've been doing things,

and I'll keep right on in your way — only, you are not to ask me a single question till the end of the week." Jumping down from the table, she crowded into the big chair with Audrey, and listened attentively to her directions.

So it came that early on Monday morning Audrey escorted Juanita to the kitchen and formally announced to the cook and Ann that Miss Kyle would take charge of the housekeeping for that week. Cook's face was a study! She rattled and banged her pots and pans about a good deal more than necessity demanded, and dark thoughts of "quitting" went through her mind. But, later on, when Audrey was safe in the attic room with Sharley, Little John paid another visit to the culinary department, and had a conversation with the reigning spirit. The interview was short, but evidently satisfactory, judging from the beaming countenance, the effusive politeness with which cook ushered the young lady out, and her remark afterward to Ann, that "Miss Wannie was cert'nly as swate an' illigant a young laidy as a body'd be wantin' to lay eyes on!"

And so smoothly did the domestic machinery run, and so satisfactory were the accounts, when the girls went over them at the end of the week, that Audrey was obliged to yield to Juanita's wish to continue to keep house for her.

"But Juan, how did you ever manage? And you so new at housekeeping, too!" asked Audrey, her sleepy eyes wide with astonishment. Then, as an idea crossed her mind, she colored vividly, and

an expression of great distress came over her face. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "you have n't — oh, Juan! you have n't been spending — your own money in the house!"

"Not a penny! — not a penny! — not a *penny!*" cried Little John, waving her hands emphatically at her friend. "Truly! I know what a proud lot you are. I just let cook do the ordering; but I told her she *must* be economical!" The air with which she said this! "And that she must keep Ann up to the mark — both of 'em to do their level best — until Sharley was well, and able to take hold of things again. (It's nobody's business if I promised to give 'em each a handsome present, when that time comes — for doing their duty, and not letting *any*thing go to waste," thought this wily young "anaconda.")

"And you had such nice things — such a variety — which Sharley says is so hard to get when one has n't much to spend. Well, you are a wonder!" declared Audrey; and was thankful to let Juanita continue the good work which seemed to weigh so lightly upon her.

But, several weeks later, when Sharley's recovery was sufficiently assured to be only a matter of time, and she insisted on hearing "all about everything," she was neither so happy nor so satisfied over Juanita's success as Audrey had expected.

"But, Audrey, you should never have let her undertake it!" she exclaimed, a quiver of weakness in her voice. "You should have known better than to impose on her in that way. Paying all

her expenses here — so liberally, too — and then working for us like a slave! I felt 't was a good deal to ask her to take care of dear little mother — I knew your hands would be full," with an apologetic glance; "but to let her be bothered with the housekeeping — to let her know just how much, or rather how little, we have to live on — all our little, petty economies — I did think you would have had more sense! more pride!" Her voice broke, and she moved her head restlessly on the pillow, two bright spots of color flaming into her thin, white cheeks.

Audrey sat convicted. "Why, Sharl! I did n't think 't was any harm — I did n't suppose you 'd mind her knowing how much we have to spend, or I would n't have let Juan touch the housekeeping!" she said humbly, but surprised. "Why, you yourself have said many a time that being poor was nothing to be ashamed of. I did n't dream that you would object — and I had so many other things to see to. And, really, Sharl," earnestly — eager to soothe her sister, and to set herself right with her, "it was n't any bother at all to her. She said so; and she has done splendidly! Everything has gone so smoothly! You are not angry with me now, dear, are you? I could n't have done it half so well as Juanita has — though I would have tried, had I known you would have preferred it. The one week I kept house I went over the allowance — and got the accounts awfully muddled up — and had several fusses with cook. Now Juan has n't fallen behind once. No — no, Sharley," as her sis-

ter made a quick gesture; "no, she promised me *faith*fully that she would n't attempt to use any of her money in the house. And we can trust Juan — I know we can. Now, do you still feel provoked over it? You don't blame me — do you?" as she spoke pressing lovingly to her cheek the hand that lay on the outside of the bedclothes.

Sharley's wasted fingers returned the pressure. "I 'm sure you have done your best, Aud," she said gently, a little wearily, too. "One can't expect more from any one, I suppose; and, as you say, poverty is no disgrace — though," she dropped her voice, as if speaking to herself, but Audrey caught the words, "false pride is! Now, Audrey dear, better leave me alone for a while. You know mums is coming to see me to-morrow — and I must save my strength to have a nice visit with her."

"Oh, Sharl! I am so glad, so happy that you are better!" exclaimed Audrey fervently. "You *dear* sister!"

But after she had gone poor Sharley turned her face to the wall. "They don't miss me at all! They get along just as well — even mums! And I thought I was so indispensable!" she moaned, and wept some bitter tears.

Her next visitor was Juanita, in outdoor dress, and bearing in her hands a bunch of early spring flowers — brave jonquils, small, golden-hearted marguerites, and crisp, gay tulips. The combinations of color were striking; and the sight of the pretty things gave Sharley comfort.

"Oh, how good of you!" she exclaimed, reaching out her arms to receive them.

This was the first time Juanita had seen Sharley since her illness, and the birdlike hands, the white, wasted face and hollow eyes gave her a shock. A rush of strong affection stirred her heart; putting the flowers hastily into Sharley's hands, she dropped on her knees beside her, and threw her arms about the long white figure. "Oh, Sharley!" was all she found to say; but the tone of her voice, the clinging of her arms, affected the sick girl deeply, and drove from her heart a feeling which had been rankling there for a couple of hours, making her very unhappy. Turning Little John's face up to view, she gave her one of her rare kisses.

"Thank you for the flowers, dear," she said. "They are the ones I 'm very fond of." Presently she added: "I have some other things to thank you for, Juanita — for your faithful, loving care of mother — and for taking over the housekeeping during my illness. You have been especially kind; and I hear that you have done — splendidly!"

Surely in these last unusual weeks — perhaps in the companionship of the sensitive little mother — Juanita's perceptive faculty had quickened — grown delicate and acute, else how should she have understood the significance of that little pause in Sharley's last sentence — the slight quiver in her languid voice? for Audrey would never have repeated to her her sister's words of disapproval. With a sudden intuition, Little John caught Shar-

ley's thin hands in hers. "Sharley," she said, in her honest, downright way, "cook and Ann 've done — are doing — as well as they can; but they're only privates — so am I a private at the business — and we all know it, too. There is only one general — one leader — in this house — and *you* are that one. We're scrambling along somehow — it seems fine to Audrey, from the outside; but *I* know, and the servants know, that things aren't going in the house as they would if you were at the head. Only this morning cook grumbled something about being thankful enough when you could take hold of the housekeeping again. She thought I didn't hear her, but I did. Don't you worry about the house — we can keep on 'scrambling' until you are perfectly well, and equal to it again; but don't for one minute fancy that I could manage affairs as you do — or *ever* fill your place. And there's your mother — I've done my best — but I'm sure she has suffered at my hands!" She laughed, with a comical glance at Sharley. "I mean well," she said; "but that isn't everything — is it?"

Sharley raised herself up on one elbow, her gray eyes held a very tender light. "You have a noble, generous nature!" she cried warmly. "You make me ashamed of myself!" The color dyed her pale face scarlet, her lips and chin trembled with weakness and emotion; but the confession was made. "Audrey has told me — just now — what good care you are taking of mother — how splendidly you are managing the house. I know

it is all true, and" — her voice sank to a whisper, but every word was distinct — "I let such a mean, wicked feeling come into my heart! I got so unhappy — *jealous* of you! I love mother so dearly — they 've all depended on me — I got conceited; I thought no one else could ever — do for them what I did — as well. But I 've had a lesson — I 'll not soon forget it. I feel better, now that I 've told you — and I *am* thankful — truly, sincerely grateful to you for all you have done for us, and are doing! Will you forgive me — Little John?"

The unaccustomed name fell very sweetly from her lips; and the humility in her voice astonished Juanita, and went straight to her heart. That Sharley — proud, reserved Sharley — should say this to her! She guessed something of what that confession must have cost her; and with the knowledge, came a new, strong sympathy for Sharley. She would have loved to give her another warm hug, a hearty kiss, but refrained; not feeling sure of how these attentions might be received, she contented herself with softly patting and stroking the thin hand she still held in hers. "Forgive you! Why Sharley! what an idea! Why, there 's nothing to forgive!" she exclaimed; then suddenly bending forward, her black eyes lighting up, she said eagerly: "Do you know — I understand exactly how you must have felt — it 's just come to me how *I* 'd feel if I thought somebody was trying to take my place with daddy! — even if 't was to help him. I would be raving,

tearing jealous — and *fur*iously mad! So I understand, Sharl! Only I 'm afraid I never could ask that person to forgive me for being — angry — as you 've done."

"Oh yes you could, and would — if you learned, as I did, how absolutely unreasonable such a feeling was. Jealousy is a wretched monster to harbor, Juanita — have nothing to do with him!" Sharley said, smiling faintly. The color had faded from her face; it was as white now as the pillows on which she rested.

"Oh, you 're awfully tired!" Juanita began. "Can't I give you something?" But here, to her great relief, Katy came bustling in, and invited her young mistress to leave the room, with the reminder that "Miss Sharley 'd best be kapin' her stringth for the doin's av to-morrer."

On this "to-morrer" happened to fall two birthdays — Sharley's and Little John's; and with grateful hearts in the family for the assurance of Sharley's recovery, there were many demonstrations of joy throughout the day. With certain intervals of time between, all the members of the household (including Ann and the cook) were allowed to go into Sharley's room and present to her, his or her birthday offering — such a funny collection as some of these gifts were, too! — all save the little mother, who sat patiently in the sitting-room awaiting her turn.

Every day through the anxious weeks of Sharley's illness, Dr. Atkin had himself informed Mrs. Latimer of his patient's condition, and every day

had the little mother sent a note up to Sharley — tender, brave, little notes, which Sharley kept under her pillow, and had Ted read to her again and again in the long, weary hours when sleep refused to be wooed. For over two months mother and daughter had not met; but to-day Ted was coming home early from business to carry "mums" in his arms to the attic room; this visit was to be the crowning gift of Sharley's birthday.

Little John had not been forgotten, either. A huge box of roses from Thorley, a smaller but more costly parcel from Tiffany, a telegram and a letter — these were "daddy's" birthday presents. The roses Juanita distributed over the house — including the sick girl's room; the jewels she immediately put on, and carried the telegram and letter in the bosom of her shirt waist all day, where she could give them a loving pat now and then. Beside this, there were a few outside gifts, and — like Sharley — something from each member of the family — except Teddy. He had gone away very early to business — so Little John reminded herself as she looked over the presents spread out on her table — but he would be home before she and Audrey went to Mrs. Burton's; of that she felt sure. Guessing the strain of those long weeks of serious illness in the house, Mrs. Burton had invited the two girls to dine with her and Roger on Juanita's birthday. "For a little change," she had written in her note of invitation, and Mrs. Latimer had gladly agreed. Mrs. Burton's companion would call for the girls and

bring them back in the carriage. But Ted would be home before they went, and Little John whistled gayly, and sang as she dressed — she was learning now to do very well without Katy's services.

Sure enough, when she ran downstairs on her way to the sitting-room for a few minutes' chat with Mrs. Latimer, who should open the front door with his key and walk in but Teddy. He was looking tired and serious, but at sight of Juanita, smiling, radiant, in her dainty summer gown, his face brightened wonderfully. "Oh, how d' do!" he said pleasantly. "Many happy, very happy returns of your birthday!" But he did n't shake hands, as she had expected, nor was there the warmth in his tone which she thought the occasion deserved.

In the weeks of Sharley's illness Juanie had seen a good deal of Ted, for, save for certain hours in which he gave a young man private lessons in bookkeeping, he spent a part of every evening with his mother in the sitting-room. And in that time she had come to the conclusion that "he could be very peculiar sometimes" — what she privately called "airish and freaky!" To his mother he was uniformly attentive and loving; but to Juanita his manner was very changeable — although no one appeared to notice it but herself. He would be kind, friendly, the merry Copperfield whom she had liked from the first, then change, without apparent cause, and treat her with an indifference, and a punctilious politeness which made

Little John feel, as she expressed it, "a thousand miles away from him!" She disliked this manner of his very much, and especially resented it to-day. "H'm," she remarked, putting her chin up disdainfully; "you're so late about it, you might's well say, 'Happy returns of the evening!' — the day is most gone. But *every*body," flashing a reproachful glance at him, "did n't forget me, thank goodness! See what my dear old daddy sent me," she pointed to the sparkling jewels at her throat and on her slim brown finger. "And I got lots more things!" Then, with fine descriptive powers, she enumerated all her presents.

Ted leaned against the wall and listened calmly and coldly, glanced at the costly gems, and laid his hand fiercely, savagely over his pocket, in which lay a fresh, dewy little bunch of violets — all he had to offer. "You are one of the fortunate ones of the earth," he said gravely — indifferently it seemed to her. "I hope yours will always be a happy lot."

Little John suddenly felt badly treated, cheated, hurt. "Oh, Teddy!" she cried out; there was a grieved note in her voice. "You're just spoiling my birthday!"

"Spoiling your birthday?" echoed Ted, bewildered, taking a step forward.

"Yes, *spoiling* it!" repeated Little John firmly; then with a blur of tears across her soft black eyes, she broke out impatiently: "I just despise that stiff, prim manner you put on sometimes! I think it's perfectly horrid! Such a lordly, stuck-up air!"

With a sudden change of mood, though a tear was actually hanging on her long lashes, she hastily caught up a fold of her light, dainty gown at the back, as a man would his coat tails, and strutted consequentially about the hall, her pointed chin held high. "Such a grand Pooh-Bah — 'Go away — go away!'" out went one brown little hand, the fingers flirting airily. "'Go *away!* I don't play with little persons!' I 'm *not* a 'little person' — and I won't be treated so!" She stopped and looked at Teddy with her head on one side, for he was laughing heartily; a bright, eager expression had chased the sombreness from his face.

"You foolish Little John!" he said, but his eyes looked very kindly at her.

The next instant she was beside him, shaking an admonitory finger at him. "Oh, you bad Teddy! Oh, you wicked Copperfield! — I 've found you out!" she declared with mock severity; then with a sweet, roguish laugh, "You've got a birthday present for me, Teddy — it 's hanging half out of your pocket! Don't you think you might as well give it to me before it falls on the floor?" And, red as he got, Ted had to join in her laugh.

"You 're a little witch!" he told her; then, as he laid the fragrant purple blossoms shamefacedly in her slender palm, "They are a poor gift," he said. "If I had n't been such a bloomin' fool as to go into all that trouble, I might 've had something better to offer you to-day."

But Juanita interrupted him; her eyes soft and shining, her small, red mouth smiling gratefully up

at him. "You 've given me just what I like best," she said earnestly, holding the violets with the tenderest care. "'T is n't the value of the gift, Teddy — but to know that you thought of me."

That surprised Ted. "Thought of you!" he exclaimed indignantly, vehemently. "What! Did you suppose I had *forgotten* your birthday!"

Clang-a-lang! went the bell, startling the two who stood in the hall, and bringing Audrey out into the upper corridor.

"Juan! Juan! that 's the carriage to take us to Mrs. Burton's," she called, leaning over the banisters. "Oh, dear, you have n't got your hat on yet! And mother said we must n't keep Mrs. Burton waiting. Do hurry!"

And with a quick, happy nod at Ted, Little John rushed upstairs, to put the violets carefully in water, and to get on her hat.

CHAPTER XV

A MYSTERIOUS PRESENT AND A SURPRISE

In all the crowded weeks of Sharley's illness Audrey and Little John had yet managed to find time for the work they had undertaken for Miss Findler. The posing and the pen-and-ink sketching went on at "odd moments," and each month Juanita made up two, sometimes three and four little paper models, which were always accepted. The girls enjoyed their secret immensely. It was such fun to open the little box where Audrey stored her wealth, and count over the precious bills, and see how the amount was growing. In Little John's desk was another box, a dainty, girlish affair, in which, each month, she spread out smoothly the sum she received for her fashion designs. She had said nothing, even to Audrey, of what she intended doing with this money; but it was evidently something that held pleasure for her, for she often opened the drawer just for the satisfaction of looking at the outside of that box, and occasionally she would give it a proud, affectionate, little pat.

"Don't you think you should give it soon to Ted?" she asked one afternoon, motioning to the contents of the money box, which lay spread out

on Audrey's lap; it was one of their pleasant times of counting. "It 's getting such a lot!"

"Yes, I 'd like to," Audrey agreed. "But there 's Sharley; I don't believe she has anything ready yet. And it may be ever so long before she has — and I would n't want her bothering about this before she is quite strong — you know Ted may get angry with us! He is really fussily particular about money matters since that trouble — he 's so afraid we may try to save him some expense he ought to shoulder. I have a horrid feeling — a sort of conviction — that he 'll not take this money — that he 'll refuse it point-blank if Sharley offers it to him. Would n't that be perfectly dreadful! — after all our working, too!" She looked anxiously at her friend.

"Goodness me! that would be horrid!" cried Little John in alarm. "Can't you think of a way to get him to do it? Oh, he *must* take it!"

Audrey shook her head. "Ted is a dear, good fellow," she said, "and the kindest! but if he makes up his mind that he will or he will not do a certain thing — there 's no moving him! He does n't often get obstinate, but when he does! — well; as I said — there 's no moving him. And he feels so cut up over this trouble — so sensitive about it, that I 'm afraid he 'll feel insulted and say, 'No, indeed, I could n't think of taking *your* money to help settle *my* debt!' Then what could we do? That would just end the whole matter," this last in a tone of despair.

"Oh, but Audrey — Audrey!" exclaimed Jua-

nita in remonstrance. She looked almost ready to cry with disappointment.

"Well, now, I have thought of something," said Audrey. "Come close and listen." She dropped her voice to a whisper, though they two were alone in the attic room. (Sharley was now able to be downstairs again, though slow in getting back her strength.) "Come closer, Juan!" With their heads together she unfolded her plan, ending with: "It's my own brother, and my own aunt; so there is n't any harm in my doing it without first speaking to Sharley. I'm doing this so Ted shan't have a chance to refuse. He would be sure to ask Sharley if she knew anything about it — but he'd never suspect me. And I'm seventeen now — I'm old enough to have some judgment of my own. I don't think Sharl will mind." But the expression of her eyes was rather anxious.

The assurance she looked for came promptly. "Why I think it's a *fine* plan — perfectly splendid!" cried Juanie. "I don't see why Sharley should object. H'm! I guess she'll think you're pretty smart to fix things so Teddy could n't refuse. And, as you say, you're seventeen — so'm I," putting her chin up proudly; "and it's your own aunt, your own brother, and your own money! *I* say — go straight ahead!"

"No, Juan, it is n't all mine; I consider that half of it is yours," Audrey said. "I know I could n't have done those drawings properly without your help; I would've been sure to get some trimming in the wrong place or crooked, or a

sleeve out of place, or a mistake somewhere. And all that tiresome posing — does n't that count? I consider that you have earned fully half of this money," touching the bills that lay on her lap.

Little John's eyes shone. "Well, then, I repeat what I said — go straight ahead with your plan," she advised. "Can't we get it off today?"

"Yes; if you'll write the letter," Audrey agreed. "You see aunt Angela would know my handwriting at once. What shall we say?"

Paper and pen were immediately got out, and the two girls put their wits together to concoct a suitable letter. It was some time before this was accomplished, and then Juanita undertook to have it posted.

"I'll seal it," she said, slipping the letter, fat with its inclosure of bills, into the envelope she had just addressed in a handwriting which she had tried to make very bold and masculine. "I'll hunt up Jamie and get him to run to the corner post-box with it. Stay up here until I come back — I won't be long."

Racing down to her room, she carefully shut the door behind her, also the door leading into Katy's apartment, then ran to her desk and took out the little box which she had so often looked at with pride, and patted. Quickly the bills were drawn out, folded, and slipped into the envelope, which was then sealed; and she went in search of Jamie.

A little later she reappeared in the attic room, where Audrey awaited her. "Well, that's off

our minds!" she announced gayly, throwing herself down on the window seat. "And if that goes all right, we'll send another lot — as soon's we can make some more money. Eh? I have n't minded doing the work — have you? And as to those fashion models — why, I just enjoy making 'em. I keep thinking of more and more things — new styles, you know — all the time. I guess I'll keep right on doing them, just for the fun of it. Would n't you?"

But the prompt affirmative which she expected did not come. "Would n't you — if you were I?" she asked, looking up in surprise.

Audrey's answer surprised her still more. "Well — you see, Juan," she said, hesitating and coloring vividly, "it would be all right — if you needed the money — but" —

"Why, you're the very one that said everybody should work," interrupted Juanita indignantly. "And now, when I *am* working — you must needs find something to object to in it! If you are n't the queerest!" Her chin went up, and a sparkle came into her black eyes.

"Oh yes, work; but not always for one's self," Audrey said hastily. "You know what I mean; if you were working for — a living — or — well — Oh, don't let's say any more about it" — She broke off, looking red and uncomfortable.

"Yes, we *will* say more about it," insisted Juanita. "I think you should tell me right out what you mean."

Audrey's face grew full of distress. "I know

what I mean, but I may n't be able to explain myself properly," she said, in a shy, nervous manner that was very like her mother's. "And you may feel hurt." But there was no relenting in the black eyes that were fixed upon her, so she went on, stumbling over her words at first, but growing more earnest as she proceeded. "If you were working for your living — you know, if you were poor and had to — of course it would be right, quite right, for you to keep on with the designing. Or if you were doing the work for some purpose — to help some one that you could n't help in any other way." She saw the watchful eyes soften, and continued less nervously, though the soft expression soon died out. "But you are well off — rich — you don't need what you get for the work. And, maybe, by your doing this for Miss Findler — just for fun, as you say — you are taking the position from some one — some girl who is poor and actually needs the money to live. See? Don't you remember I told you about the girl I met in the office while I was waiting to see Miss Findler, the last time I was there — how poorly she was dressed, and how sad she looked? I heard her say to the other girl who was with her, as they were going out: 'She does n't want any more designs from me — she 's got somebody that does them better! I 'm awfully sorry!' If you had heard her tone, Juan, you 'd have been sorry, too. I told you about it — but that 's not like hearing it yourself. It set me thinking."

"Well, I can't help it if my designs are better

than hers — *can* I?" demanded Little John imperiously.

Audrey looked at her. "I know you have beautiful taste in dress," she said quietly; "but perhaps this poor girl could do much better than she does now if she had all the lovely gowns and things that you have, and always have had. I asked Miss Findler about her. She said she did very good work, but had not enough variety in her ideas."

"Well," repeated Juanie, in the same hard tone, "can I help it if she has n't got fine gowns? Is it *my* fault? Am I to go to her and beg her to take all my clothes? — and beseech her to allow me to teach her all I know? Why — the way you talk, anybody 'd think I had actually cheated that girl out of" —

But Audrey had sprung up impulsively, ignoring or forgetting her friend's anger. "Oh, Juan, that's just it — that's *just* what I had in my mind — only I could n't seem to get hold of it with my tongue!" she cried out, interrupting Juanita's angry speech. "If you were doing this designing to teach some one else by and by — some one that would gain by it — be helped by it — then 't would be right — and perfectly beautiful of you to do it. But it does n't seem fair for a rich girl to take a position — to earn money — just for the fun of it — when her doing that puts some other — poor — girl out of work, — takes the bread out of another girl's mouth, as Katy says. Now does it? But you are such a dear, generous crea-

ture — you 're always thinking of something nice to do for somebody! Oh, Juan! if you *would* find out that girl — if you *would* let her see your lovely clothes — and teach her how to design as you do! Oh, that would be splendid! perfectly splendid! It would be only a little trouble to you, and just think how it would benefit her — help her to earn a good living — perhaps all the rest of her life! Is n't that what you mean?" In her eagerness she laid her hand on Juanita's arm, looking up at her with a delighted, affectionate expression.

But Little John threw the hand off; she was very angry. "Indeed! I 'm not going to teach her anything!" she blazed out. "Daddy did n't send me to New York to go round taking care of all the stupid, miserable creatures that can't earn their own living. *You* can do that — since you feel so badly over it! And I 'll do just as much designing for Miss Findler as I choose — and take the money, too! It 's none of your business if I do! D' you hear me?" She stamped her foot to emphasize this remark, then whirled out of the room, leaving Audrey looking after her, with quivering lips and eyes brimful of tears.

Down the stairs went Little John in a great hurry; in a towering rage, and yet with a heavy, uncomfortable feeling in the depths of her heart. It was this last feeling that carried her past the open door of her own room, ignoring Katy's call of, "Miss Wannie, will ye be afther shtoppin' a minute!" and headlong on to the sitting-room.

But, to her disappointment, the little mother was

not in her usual place; instead, Sharley sat on the lounge alone, busy over something which Juanita at first supposed to be sewing. She recognized the visitor's footsteps, and without looking up, said pleasantly: "Well, Juanie, what can I do for you? Can you come and sit awhile with me?"

Since Sharley's illness there had been a much kinder, warmer feeling between herself and Juanita, but there was yet a little of the old formality; and Little John had no desire to tell her of what had just occurred. Besides, Sharley's times of cordiality were not frequent — and unconsciously that had its influence now. With a toss of her head Juanita tried to throw off her anger; and straightening her face, dropped into a chair beside Sharley. "What are you doing?" she exclaimed, bending forward.

Sharley laughed. "Are n't they pretty?" she asked, holding up to view two tiny white worsted sacks, through the edges of which was run narrow, colored ribbon — through one pink, and the other blue. "Audrey mended and you finished the housekeeping so thoroughly up to date, that I have had some extra time on my hands. And as Dr. Atkin advised I should not read too long, until I am stronger, I bethought me of a neighbor of ours whom I heard had a wee, baby girl, and no little coat to put on her when she went out. So, in my idle moments, while I was resting, I 've made these, and this pair of tiny socks — and I really feel proud of my handiwork." She held them off, gazing at the dainty little things, with her head on

one side, and an honest enjoyment in her hollow gray eyes.

"A neighbor — anybody I know?" asked Juanita, wondering who this neighbor of the Latimers' might be that had no outdoor garment for her child. She could think of no one who answered to the description, and she thought she had knowledge of all the families that lived on the block.

"No, you don't know her; I've never met her — she is my 'neighbor' in the sense of being poorer than I, and sick, and in trouble," Sharley said simply, still looking at her work. "I heard of her from one of our deaconesses." She began folding the little garments in tissue paper, and putting them carefully into a box. "I know you can keep a secret," she said, smiling up at Juanita, "so I'll let you share another with me. You know I'm going to church to-morrow, for the first time since I was taken ill, and to return thanks for my recovery. God has been so good to me — to let me get well; it would have been awfully hard to have left mother and all the rest of them! And I did want to make Him a thank-offering." A faint color flushed into Sharley's pale cheeks. "I'd love to have given Him of silver and gold, as well as the praise of a thankful heart; but I have no money — absolutely none of my own. So I made these," she held up the little box, "as a sort of thank-offering. I had the worsted in the house, and the bits of ribbon — so the things have cost me no money, only the pleasant labor of making them. Instead of being placed on the Lord's

table to-morrow — as it would be if 't were money — Ann will take my offering to the baby's mother this evening. But God does not consider the intrinsic — market — value of an offering made to Him, He looks at the heart; and He knows how sincerely I thank Him for my recovery — and — for Ted's giving up that — gambling — for that 's just what it is! My heartfelt gratitude will be considered in the sight of the Lord — it will, I hope, be accepted for what is lacking in the value of my gift. *He* will understand!" Her lips trembled a little, but she was smiling.

Juanita sat and looked at her — and thought of the unsuccessful girl that Audrey had just told her of. Her anger seemed to have died away, but she was very far from happy. "Oh, there 's your mother!" she exclaimed, springing up. "I want to speak to her." She started for the small, many-windowed extension room where Mrs. Latimer kept her plants, and was almost at the door, when she turned and, with one of her quick, characteristic movements, was again beside the lounge where Sharley sat. "They 're pretty little coats, Sharley," she said, "and 't was very nice of you to tell me about the thank-offering — I did n't know people ever did such things. I won't speak of it to any one." She gave Sharley's hand a hurried squeeze, and went hastily into the extension.

It was in no sense a regular conservatory, but on a green-painted circular stand, and on a shelf or two along the wall, were ranged some plants that the little mother was fond of. She was

going leisurely from one to another of them now, twining a vine round a slender stick for support, picking off the dead leaves, enjoying herself; but she welcomed Juanita. "Come in, dear child," she said kindly, "and see what a sturdy bush this hydrangea is growing to be." Then, as Little John came to her side, she put out her slender, nervous hand. "My dear, something is troubling you!" she exclaimed apprehensively. "What is it? Tell me."

But first Juanita kissed her. "It is n't any trouble — truly!" she assured her. "Only something I 've been — well — thinking about — and getting mad over. I do get angry *so* quickly! Oh, dear!" She gave a heavy sigh, and looked very solemnly at Mrs. Latimer. "Tell me, mums," once in a while when they two were quite alone she would use the home pet name; and the little mother liked her doing it; "tell me — is every poor, unfortunate, sick, unsuccessful person in the world some other person's 'neighbor'? You understand — because the some other person is — well, better off — has more money — should she — he — feel bound to just devote his whole time to — well, just make a slave of himself to teach that unsuccessful person to get on, and be successful? Must one feel *bound* to be always doing something for somebody else? Because," impatiently, "*I* don't like that sort of thing *one* bit!"

Mrs. Latimer did not smile at the incoherent outburst. She stroked Little John's hand with her soft, thin fingers for a while before replying.

"Well," she said slowly, "we *are* all neighbors — rich and poor, neighbors alike — and we should be glad of opportunities to help one another. I should n't like to feel bound, as you say, to help any one. I should rather prefer to feel it was a privilege — a great blessing to me — to have opportunity for doing good, and the means with which to relieve sorrow and distress." She said this in her gentle, hesitating way, glancing deprecatingly at the tall girl beside her, whose eyebrows met in a heavy frown as she listened.

"Goodness!" she exclaimed irritably. "Then I suppose you think I ought to be teaching people and doing all sorts of things for 'em, and not wanting to have a good time at all, myself — just because daddy 's got money! I don't think that 's fair one bit — *I* want to have some fun!" There was a quiver in her voice, and tears were dimming the black eyes.

Mrs. Latimer slipped an arm round Juanita's waist. "And so you can have some fun — lots of it!" she assured the girl. "But you must do good in the world, too, dear, or you would become a mere butterfly — and that I would never want to see you." She looked lovingly at her. "You may have the handling of great wealth one of these days, and that is a large responsibility. The more one has of anything — money, position, intellect, beauty — the larger return will be expected in the Day of Reckoning; 'of him that hath, much will be required.' But don't let it weigh upon you to make you unhappy, dear child.

You have a generous nature, a tender heart — I have no fear of your not doing your full share for every one who comes under your notice. You will never forget the poor — nor oppress the needy. I am not afraid of your shirking what is right to do." She pressed the girl to her side; and Juanita threw her arms around the little mother's neck.

"Oh, you *are* a *dear!*" she cried, in a vehement whisper; then turned and ran away, upstairs to her own room, where she threw herself down on the lounge, burying her face deep in the cushions. Katy was not present, but Agagio was — curled up on the softest chair he could find; and most comfortable though his quarters were, he immediately leaped to the floor, and putting his front paws on the edge of the lounge, licked Little John's ear which was uppermost, and bumped his big head against her shoulder with every sign of doggish affection and sympathy. And evidently his attentions were appreciated, for presently Juanita lifted her face from the depths of the cushion, and putting an arm around Gagio's neck, gave him a hug which filled his canine heart with joy, and caused his tail to vibrate violently. "You may thank your lucky stars that you 're a dog, and not a girl with a lot of money," she informed him; then, sitting up, she began soliloquizing, in a disjointed sort of fashion. "These Latimers are the queerest set! — with their 'thank-offerings' and their 'neighbors' — and that girl! Nobody 'd ever think of such things but they. Wonder what daddy 'd say? H'm! think of her making those

little things! — weak as she is — for a 'thank-offering' — and *I've* got such a lot of money lying in that drawer! She said for Teddy, too. Poor Ted! he does look *aw*fully thin! He's just worried to death over that loan he's got to pay back. Now if he'd only have let me — well," she rose to her feet and pointedly addressed Agagio, who showed lively signs of interest, "Ted is my friend," she remarked — "his 'true, little friend,' he called me," — up went her chin with pride, — "and if there's anything to be thankful for for Ted — I'm going to do it! He won't ever know it — but God will — that was what Sharley said — and when I prayed for Sharley He spared her life — He took care of mums, too. Yes, I'll do it!" Going to her bureau, she took out of the drawer two bank bills of large denomination, and slipped them into a sheet of note paper, on which she scrawled, "A thank-offering for two people;" then she sealed up the envelope and put it carefully away. "Stay there till Sunday morning," she said, nodding to the inanimate thing; "then I'll quietly slip you into the rector's box, and nobody'll know anything about who sent it — except God. Now, there's that girl!"

She opened the door of the closet where hung her best gowns, and stood looking at them with a heavy frown. "She'll come here and just *paw* over all my things!" she declared. "And *I* don't know how to teach people anything!" Her gaze turned from the gowns off toward the open window, and soon the absent expression of the black

eyes showed that her thoughts were far away. Presently the scowl smoothed out of her forehead, and the little red mouth lost its lines of discontent. "Guess I 'll go up and see Aud," she said. "Come on, Gag!"

A minute or two later she and the terrier, both in the best of spirits, burst into the attic room where Audrey sat studying. "Aunty Aud, Agagio's mother 's come to beg pardon for being such an ugly, rude, hateful thing!" announced Juanita. "See us beg!" Sinking down before Audrey, she held up her own hands and Agagio's paws. "Please, ma'am, forgive us, and we 'll never do so any more!" she pleaded, putting on a little whine, and pretending to be trembling with fear, while her small *riante* face was all a-dimple with merriment. Then, as Audrey burst out laughing and threw her arms around both dog and girl, Juanita whispered earnestly: "Truly, Aud, I am ashamed to 've spoken to you as I did! And I *will* teach that girl — best I can — and show her all my gowns, if you 'll tell her to come."

"Oh, you dear thing! I just knew you would!" cried Audrey in delight. "I 'll write to Miss Findler at once and ask for the girl's address. Oh, Juan, I 'm very, very glad you 're going to help her!"

"Only one letter for me? I have n't heard from daddy for over a week," grumbled Little John at the breakfast table a day or two later. Then Audrey's hand gently touched hers, and Audrey

breathed into her ear, "It 's come — a letter for Ted from Philadelphia!"

It was as much as the two girls could do to go on calmly with their breakfast, with Ted sitting opposite reading what they felt sure must be an acknowledgment from Miss Latimer of the money they had remitted. Audrey nearly upset her tea-cup; and in response to Ann's query if she would have a soft-boiled egg, Juanita answered absently, "Yes — posted!" much to the entertainment of Kittredge and Rach, who giggled aloud. Their unusual confusion would certainly have attracted more attention had not Ted been deeply engrossed, frowning over his letter, and Sharley equally engrossed in looking at him. She had grown to know that in these days aunt Angela's letters to Ted always brought a shadow over his face, a remorseful sadness into his eyes. Usually he liked no remarks to be made in regard to these letters, but this morning he looked up from the written page with such a blank, utterly bewildered expression that Sharley asked, involuntarily, in a low tone, — they sat near each other, — "What is it, Ted?"

"Come upstairs presently, and I 'll show you," he answered in an equally low tone; and when, a few minutes after, he left the table, with an excuse, Sharley hastily followed.

"Read this." He put aunt Angela's letter into her hands as they stood in the hall; very soon he would start downtown for his office. Miss Latimer's note was brief, and to the point. It was characteristic.

My dear Theodore, — One hundred and twenty dollars in bills have been remitted to me to apply to your loan. The sender failed to sign his name, and must be a fool, or find money-getting an easy business, to risk such a sum in an ordinary envelope through the mail. I was asked to send no receipt. I particularly dislike mysteries, and shall not credit your account with the amount until I receive an explanation from you. My love to your mother and the family.

Your affectionate aunt,

Angela Latimer.

"I've never sent her *one* penny — not a cent since the first of the month. Have you been remitting money to aunt Angela for me — to pay my debt?" demanded Ted. There was a little fierce note in his voice that sent the color rushing into Sharley's pale face, as she remembered her slowly gathering fund in his behalf.

"No, Ted, I know nothing whatever of this," she said, lifting her honest eyes to him.

Ted never thought of Audrey, but his mind did immediately revert to another young person, whose soft black eyes had smiled "good-morning!" to him a little while ago from the opposite side of the breakfast table. "I'm going to ferret this out," he declared. "Do you suppose" — he hesitated, getting very red and stern looking — "that — Little John" —

Slam went the dining-room door; and there came Little John rushing up the basement steps

— eager, breathless, radiant, in wild excitement, her small clinched hands waving, with eyes dancing and short curls flying. "Oh! Oh! *Oh!* get out of the way!" she called out joyously. "Oh, I saw him pass the window — I *know* 't was he! Agagio! here Gag! Gag! Katy! — where are you?" her clear young voice rang through the house. "Oh, my daddy has come! my *daddy* has come!"

Before the bell could sound, she had wrenched the front door open, and with a shout of joy was in the embrace of the stout, blue-eyed man that stood on the stoop.

CHAPTER XVI

CHANGES

WITHIN a couple of weeks after the arrival of John Kyle several very unexpected and important changes had taken place in the Latimer family.

Mr. Kyle took up his abode at the nearest hotel, and spent the greater part of every day with his daughter, sometimes making his appearance at the house as early as breakfast time. The Anaconda mine-owner had the air of a prosperous man, and the quiet assurance of one in the habit of carrying his own way. He was simple and kindly natured, with a good share of shrewd mother wit, outspoken, and very unpolished in manners. This last impressed his daughter almost as if quite new to her; and she watched jealously for any signs in the Latimers of surprise or disapproval. "Daddy was *awfully* poor when he was a boy growing up in Ireland," she told the family frankly one afternoon, when her father had just taken his leave. "He went barefoot most of the time, and often didn't have enough to eat; and there was n't anybody to teach him — well — table manners and things like that. Daddy has n't had any advantages — so sometimes he does things — differently to some other people. And he can't change now — he says

he's 'too old a dog to learn new tricks.' I've told you this so you should all understand about him — he'd just as soon tell you himself; but you need n't — anybody — think that *I 'm* ashamed of my father," her chin went high in the air, "for I 'm not — not *one* atom! He's the dearest, best daddy in the whole world — and I 'm just *proud* of him!" She finished with some heat and a pointed glance at Kittredge, whose ridicule, strange as it may seem, with Sharley's opinion, was what she most dreaded.

But Kittredge was on the best of terms with Mr. Kyle, and held the highest opinion of him. "Ho! Should think you *would* be proud of him!" he cried. "He's just about A1 — clear up to the top notch! Wish mums 'd let me go back to Anaconda with him — would n't I just have the dandiest kind of a time, though! — going down in that mine, and riding all the horses!"

Sharley, too, had something kind to say. John Kyle's simplicity and straightforwardness pleased her. "In these days, when a self-made man worships his maker so unblushingly, it is a relief to meet with so natural and simple a rich man as he," she had confided to her mother; and now she said, with a warmth that was balm to Juanie's jealous pride: "We all think very highly of your father, Juanita. He seems such a good man, so unspoiled by his wealth, and he is a devoted father! And now," with an arch smile, "we know from whom you get your generous spirit. Your father is certainly a most kind and liberal

man!" And, indeed, the Latimers had good cause to think so.

On the day of his arrival Mr. Kyle took his daughter out, "for a stroll around the town," he explained, and incidentally for a long confidential talk. On their return he sent Juanita upstairs, and went himself to the sitting-room, where were Mrs. Latimer and Sharley; and there he made them a most astonishing proposition, using a kindliness, a persuasiveness, that were very like his daughter's.

"My gyrl 's been tellin' me how kind you laidies 've been to her," he said, taking a chair, and dropping his soft hat on the floor beside him. "And I can see she 's improved wonderful since she come on. 'T ain't only in looks an' manners, an' all the little frills — she was always great on them," — with an indulgent smile, — "but it 's here she 's mostly changed," he tapped his heart. "I know it by the way she talks. She always was a mighty fine gyrl, but she 's improved — that she is! I can't begin to thank you, ma'am, for what you 've done for Little John," he said earnestly, addressing Mrs. Latimer; "but there 's this about it: if you or yours ever needs a friend — here he is," slapping his chest, "as long as John Kyle's head 's above ground. And my word is as good as my bond, ma'am. Now we'll talk a little business." He hitched his chair a trifle nearer. "The arrangement between us, ma'am, was that I was to have my gyrl back in Anaconda for the summer, *re*turning to you in the fall — if all was sat'sfact'ry

on both sides. Now all *is* O. K. far 's I can hear; but I 'll have to be makin' a change in the proggram — which is onexpected on my part. Quite suddint like, I 've got to get off to the ould counthry — Europe, I mean — an' I can't bring meself to be havin' the ocean rollin' between me an' me only child, when I 'd not be layin' eyes on her for eight long months! It 's very different, you see, ma'am," he added hastily, "when a body 's got six or seven of 'em, like you — if one goes, t'others stay. Now, my intention is to be sailin' for Liverpool on the twenty-seventh, — that 's ten days from to-day, — takin' Little John wid me, an' Katy Karney, and, if you 'll be so kind as to allow her, ma'am, your gyrl, Audrey."

"Mr. *Kyle!*" exclaimed Sharley breathlessly, while the color sprang into the little mother's face, and she looked in a bewildered fashion from one to the other of her companions. "Why — why — Sharley — Mr. Kyle!" she said helplessly, her fingers fluttering; then she rallied. "You are exceedingly kind, sir!" she said, in her shy, gentle way. "But" —

John Kyle put up his hand. "Will you please to be waitin' till I've finished?" he asked, and there was a quiet decision in his manner that impressed the two women.

"I've got business to see to that 'll be kaping me on the jump for two or three months after I get on the other side," he continued, "an' then I am goin' to take the first holiday I 'd be havin' since I left Ireland — as a b'y. Now 't would be

mighty small fun for Little John to be cooped up in a hotel in London or Paris. Katy 'd be no company for her, *now!* But if you 'll be lettin' your gyrl go, ma'am, it 'll be doin' me a true kindness, for then I 'd be makin' an arrangement wid that governess body — Miss Achison, is it? — to go along, too, an' be takin' care of them two lil' maids. Her juties is done here, Little John is tellin' me, an' she could be lookin' afther the gyrls, an' takin' 'em round, sightseein', while I 'd be busy. In that case, ma'am, wid your consent, how might it do to be l'avin' the two, an' Katy, an' Miss Achison, over in Garmany — or Paris, if they 'd be likin' that better — to be stayin' awhile — a year, ma'am, or maybe two, to be l'arnin' the langwidges? Ma'am," he bent forward, putting out his hand with an earnest gesture, "I 'd be wantin' Little John to have every advantage that money could give her — I want her a tip-top laidy. I ain't had advantages meself, but I 'm *bound* to give 'em to her. An' she 'll not be stirrin' a step widout your gyrl — she 's told me that, ma'am, straight out. Little John," with a smile that lighted up his weather-beaten face, "ain't one to be kaping in what she feels. She was n't for goin' at all at first — she 's got that fond of you all, ma'am — and I would n't be urgin' her; but there 's friends av mine that says her eddication 'll never be right 'less she goes away to the contingent or some sich place for a while; an' bein' as I 'm goin' over — got to go! — seemed like this was the time for her to be goin' too." He paused a minute, pulled

out a large white silk handkerchief, and hastily mopped his face with it, then resumed his remarks, the two ladies sitting in silence, looking at him.

"Little John 's tellin' me, ma'am," he continued, "that your daughter 's strong on langwidges. Now, if she 's goin' to teach, 't would be the makin' av her to be gettin' the best accint — an' *that* 'll be on the contingent, ma'am, so I 'm told by them that knows. I 'd not be l'aving Little John in a boardin' school or anny of them places, *alone*, for annything could be offered me; but if the four o' them goes, they could be takin' a lil' house or, maybe, a flat, an' the governess could be lookin' afther the two gyrls, an' seein' they had the proper teachers, an' Katy could be doin' the wur-rk av the flat. The expense of one more in the party would n't be worth mentionin', ma'am, an' the good your gyrl 'll be doin' by goin' along wid Little John can't be counted! As I was afther sayin', I 'd consider it a favor if you 'd be lettin' Audrey go along. Now," he rose, taking his hat up by the crown, and stood stroking and pinching it back into shape, "now, I 'll be l'avin' you to think the matter over. There 's no hurry — no hurry," with a reassuring wave of his hand; "to-morrow 'll be toime enough to be givin' me an answer. Then I 'll be seein' to the staterooms an' a few other sich things. In the meanwhile, ma'am, I 've ordered a kerridge to be round here in a half hour, an' I 'd like to be takin' you two laidies an' Little John out for an airin'. I hope it 'll be convanient. Very well, ma'am! No ma'am, I 'll

not be stayin' now!" as Mrs. Latimer hastily murmured her thanks and an invitation to remain longer, hardly knowing what she was saying. Then, settling his hat firmly on his head, Mr. Kyle took his departure.

"Oh, Sharley!" "Why, mums!" exclaimed the astonished mother and daughter, as the door closed behind their visitor. Sharley recovered her wits first. "Oh, mother, what a splendid, splendid opportunity for Audrey!" she cried. "A couple of years abroad would help her wonderfully with her studies — she really has a gift for languages. She would n't be lonely with Juanita; and if Miss Achison goes too, why, we could be sure the girls were under excellent care. What a generous, kind man!"

"It would certainly be of great value to Audrey," agreed Mrs. Latimer; "but the expense, Sharley!" She was troubled; her fingers fluttered aimlessly over her sewing. "Such a trip — two years abroad — masters — and all the other things he spoke of — will cost a great deal. Would your dear father like me to accept so great a favor — from one almost a stranger to us? And yet — should I refuse such an opportunity — for my child?" Her gentle, anxious eyes turned appealingly on her daughter, and Sharley did not fail her. With the nervous hands held in a close, loving clasp, she answered: —

"Mums, dear," she said, "father was a very sensible man. He hated debt and all pretences, and he loved best to give; but you and I know that he

would never have been too proud to accept a kindness — particularly when the interest, perhaps the life interest, of some one else was concerned. I 'm sure he 'd realize what this opportunity would mean to Audrey, and would accept Mr. Kyle's offer in the kindly spirit in which it was made. What he — Mr. Kyle — says is true — it *would* be helpful to Juanita to have Audrey with her. Aud's influence has done good in that quarter; I noticed it from the very first. And do you know, mother," she smiled up into the troubled face, "I don't feel as if Mr. Kyle were a stranger. Though he and Juanita do not at all resemble each other in personal appearance, I seem to have known him a long time, through her; and he has her honest, straightforward manner — or she has his!" Sharley laughed. "And I think we would hurt his feelings, disappoint Juanie, and do Audrey an injustice were we to refuse his offer. I 'm sure Ted will agree with me. *I* say accept Mr. Kyle's kindness, and let him know how much we appreciate it"—

"Oh, mother! Sharley!" cried Audrey, bursting into the room in a state of intense excitement. "Is it true that I 'm to go to Europe with Juan — and stay two years — and study languages? Is it true? Oh, *is* it? Juan says I 'm to go. Am I?" Her sleepy eyes were wide and bright, her cheeks flushed rosy red, her manner eager, insistent, quite unlike easy-going, placid Audrey. Sinking down beside Sharley at her mother's knee, Audrey caught the other frail hand, and squeezed it tight between her palms. "Oh, you 've been talking

about it — you two!" she declared, looking from one to the other. "Oh, mums, dearie! I don't want to be selfish — I'll stay at home if you say so; but oh! 't would be a *splendid* chance — 't would be the making of me as a teacher! I could study — talk with the people — get the purest pronunciation! Sharl, you know this is the best chance I've ever had. But, mums, I will stay at home — I will, really — if — if you think — I should!" Her lips were shaking so that she could scarcely get the words out.

Mrs. Latimer drew her hand away from Audrey to pass her arm around the girl's shoulders, pressing her close to her, while with the other hand she still held firmly to Sharley. "My dear, you shall go," she said gently, soothingly. "Sharley and I have been talking the matter over, and we have decided to accept Mr. Kyle's kindness. We will speak to Teddy to-night; he is your eldest brother, you know; he should be consulted; and to-morrow we will give Mr. Kyle our answer. He said to-morrow would do. Yes, you shall go, and" —

"Daddy wants you and Sharley to go driving, and the carriage is waiting," announced Little John, walking in. "I knocked — but, perhaps, you did n't hear. And I could n't help catching what you said last" — she beamed on Mrs. Latimer — "that you 'll let Audrey go with me — to Europe! *Hurrah!*" She flourished her long arms wildly in the air. "Oh, I 'm delighted! How else could I *ever* have left — all of you!"

Her voice broke, and, with a queer little noise that was half laugh, half cry, she flew at them, threw her arms around the group, and tried to include all three in one warm, vigorous embrace.

So Ted was consulted, and the next day Mr. Kyle's offer was accepted, which he insisted in regarding as a great and personal favor to himself. And after that it seemed to the family as if the days fairly flew by on wings, until the eventful day of sailing, the twenty-seventh of June, arrived.

Besides all the unexpected planning and packing which had to be done, Mr. Kyle had always some pleasant jaunt to propose, some delightful surprise, in which he would have liked the whole family to participate. He was fond of amusement and generous in affording it to others; it was easy to see from whom Little John inherited her love of a "good time." There were drives innumerable, and sails in which Sharley and even Mrs. Latimer were persuaded to take part "to bring back the roses to their pale cheeks," Mr. Kyle urged. There were rides "out on the road" for Little John and Audrey, and Teddy was invited to join, and charming excursions for Kittredge and Rach, Miss Achison (who was now a member of the Kyle traveling party), the little ones, and Katy. Boxes of roses came constantly to the house, and fruit, candies, and ice cream were almost daily "treats." Kittredge and Rach were devoted to the newcomer, and haunted his footsteps; shy, gentle Jamie clung to his hand, and Dorrie sat on his knee.

It was in the midst of all this delightful excitement, on a day when Little John was dressing for what she called a "jolly lark" with her "daddy" and one or two of the Latimers, that Audrey came running into the room. "Oh, Juan," she cried, "that girl is downstairs! Don't you know? — the one we wrote to Miss Findler about — for her address. Her name is Hattie Eveling — and she seems awfully shy!"

"Both*er*ation!" exclaimed Juanita, sitting down suddenly in surprise and disgust. "What *ever* possessed her to come?" she said crossly.

Audrey's eyes widened. "Why, Juan! you had me write and ask her to come — don't you remember?" she reminded Juanita. "You said any afternoon this week would suit you. She 's come from away uptown; and she looks — well — as if she had n't had many 'good times.' I 'd show her willingly for you — if I only knew what to tell her." There was a pleading note in Audrey's voice. It brought vividly to Juanita's mind the struggle with herself of — could it possibly be less than a week ago? So many things had happened since, that she felt as if that day might have been a month, or even a year, ago! And it was so inconvenient — so provoking — with such a pleasant afternoon before her — to stick upstairs in that warm room and show all her best things off to some stupid, strange girl! Little John tapped her foot impatiently on the floor, and her slender black eyebrows came together in a frown. Yet she certainly had promised.

"I'll tell you, Juan," suggested Audrey; "suppose you show me two or three gowns — just easy ones, that I could understand, and I will see Miss Eveling and explain them to her the best I can. Will you? One of the others — Rach, perhaps — could take my place for the pleasure trip, and I'd stay here with her. Will you? I'd ask her to call another day, but we're going away, you know. And I think she's real poor — she has a nice face, but she's so shabby — and what you — I mean I — could show her might be *such* a help!"

With a swift, unexpected movement, Little John unpinned her hat, and sent it flying across the room on to the bed. The frown was gone; she got up quickly, patting her short, silky hair into order across her forehead. "I'm going downstairs," she announced briskly. "Daddy in the drawing-room? All right! You stay here till I come." And she ran downstairs.

In a few minutes she was back again, followed by a slight, pale girl, in a shabby skirt and shirt waist, and shy and embarrassed in manner. Juanita was cheerful, and so cordial, so friendly, that Audrey was convinced of the ultimate success of the visit.

"I have to go away to Europe in a few days," Juanita said, "and I thought perhaps you might like to see some of my gowns and things before I go; then you could get ideas for your designs for Miss Findler. I've made some models for her lately," she added, seeing the surprise in her visitor's eyes. Then she explained which the

models were, and the young designer recognized their description at once.

"Oh yes, they were beautiful!" she said involuntarily.

The wistfulness in her voice touched Little John. "You could do *just* as well if you had lots of pretty things to look at and give you ideas," she declared generously. "Now, I 'm going to show you some of my gowns to-day — the newest and prettiest — and help you make up a couple of models to take to Miss Findler. Oh, Aud, there 's daddy calling you!"

"Does he know of your not going?" asked Audrey in a whisper; but the stranger's ears caught the words. "I hope I 'm not keeping you from going out," she said, getting up from her chair, and looking very much embarrassed.

"Oh, that 's all right!" Juanita answered quickly. Then, significantly, to Audrey, "Clare Anderson is going. Daddy is to stop for her. Hurry, Aud; he 's waiting!" She gave Audrey a little push toward the door, but not before the latter had flashed a bright, approving glance at her; then, instead of calling Katy from the next room, Little John herself, with a consideration born of kindness of heart, brought out several of her newest, most cherished gowns, and proceeded to call her visitor's attention to various points about them that were novel and striking. "Take off your hat, and sit in this chair; it 's more comfortable," she said. "And now I 've got a lot of tissue paper here," she went on; "let 's make

up two models from these four gowns. We 'll take this, and this, and this," indicating features in the garments before them, "and put them together for number one. Then we 'll pick out some other things, and work them into another model, for number two. This way! You understand? That 's good!" seeing the intelligence in the young girl's face. "Now, we 'll begin."

When Audrey came in from her afternoon jaunt she found Little John lying at full length on the lounge in her room, balancing the heel of one slim, daintily shod foot on the toe of the other, and regaling herself with chocolate creams. Her small face wore an expression of great satisfaction. "Oh, Juan, we had a lovely time! I do wish you could 've been along!" Audrey exclaimed. "I 'm sure your father was disappointed that you were n't in the party, but 't was just sweet of you to stay back! I kept thinking of you, and almost felt mean to be enjoying myself so much when you were shut up here" —

"Well, you need n't 've felt badly," Juanita calmly assured her, "for the time went like a flash! I really enjoyed showing that girl my things. Here, have some chocolates — do!" She brought both her feet to the level of the lounge and held out the box of candies. "She 's just as bright as she can be," went on Little John, sitting back comfortably again. "'T was a pleasure to teach her — truly! She caught on so quickly — understood, you know. All she wants is a little training, and some confidence, — now she 's afraid

to trust her own ideas, — and to see some decent clothes. I 'm ever so glad we — 't was really you — told her to come ; she 'll be a credit to us yet — you 'll see ! Now, we 've got six more days before we sail ; so I 've told her to come here three times more — to-morrow, and next day, and the next — in the afternoon."

"Oh, that 's perfectly lovely of you !" cried Audrey, all interested. "But, remember, you 'll not be able to go out with your father then. Will he object ?"

"Why, *no !*" exclaimed Juanita, laughing. "Why, daddy would never object to anything I might do — unless, of course, it was something dreadful. He knows about Hattie Eveling — I told him to-day ; and he 's going to hear more about her, too," with a decided nod of her curly head. She sat up suddenly. "Oh, Aud !" she said earnestly, a soft pink color coming into the clear, smooth brown of her cheeks, "if you had seen that poor girl's face when I explained why I 'd sent for her — and that I wanted to help her ! It went to my heart ! And she 's so thin and pale — so shabby and dowdy ! It occurred to me, why should *I* have so much, and she so little ? I know I 'm just a useless sort of person — a kind of a butterfly — all the time thinking of enjoying myself — and there is she, working — slaving — and thankful to do it — to support her sick mother, and a little sister that 's going to school ! It seemed all wrong — so uneven — and I got real unhappy over it after she 'd gone. And then I

remembered the talk you and I had — you know — about wealth being a responsibility! I 'm going to make daddy do something for that girl before we go" (her eyes were moist, there was a little tremble in her voice), "something that will help her with her work. And — I 've made up my mind — while we 're in Paris I 'm going to take lessons in fashions and in making up models and all there is to the business. Then when we come home — goodness! we 'll be over nineteen then — *think* of it, Aud!" (it might have been over ninety, from her tone) — "when we come home, I 'll start a school — a free school — I 've got some money of my own, and I know dad will want to join in — where girls can go and learn to design gowns and hats and things like that, and so be able to earn a good living. I 'll teach them all I know; and you must surely help me get the school started, Aud — I could n't do it without you."

"Why, of course, I 'll help you!" cried Audrey warmly. "Juan, that would be a *beautiful* thing to do! Oh, you dear, generous girl! Did n't I tell you I knew Juanie Kyle would never be a drone!"

Little John hastily brushed a tear off her lashes, settled back on the lounge, put her feet up on end again, and wiggled them cheerfully while she nibbled at a chocolate with a great air of having finished with the subject. "Now, come sit down here," she said airily, "and tell me where you people went this afternoon — and every single thing you can think of about my dear old daddy."

It was the next afternoon that Juanita unexpectedly came face to face with Ted at the foot of the attic stairs.

"Oh — well met!" Teddy said. "I've been looking everywhere for you. Come in here," — he opened the schoolroom door, — "I want to have a quiet talk with you."

Juanie immediately thought of the Philadelphia letter which Ted had received a few mornings before, and her heart gave a startled thump. In the unexpected arrival of Mr. Kyle, and the subsequent excitement, the girls had rather got over their anxiety in regard to the contents of aunt Angela's letter to Ted. They had heard nothing and had been only too glad to think that all was well — as they would like. But now there was an abruptness about Teddy's address, a decision in his voice, that made Little John at once on the alert and very uneasy.

"Oh, I can't stop now," she declared hastily; "it's nearly dinner time — and daddy's waiting — and" —

She essayed to pass Ted, but he put out a detaining hand. "Dinner is half an hour off, fully," he told her, "and your father is in the drawing-room talking to mums and to Colonel and Mrs. Anderson, who are to dine with us; he'll not miss you for a while yet. And what I have to say is important. Come!" He quietly drew her into the schoolroom, and closed the door behind them.

"Well," Juanita said, standing by the table,

and putting up her chin defiantly, to carry off some nervousness, "what 's it all about? Hurry up!"

And Ted went straight to the point, with a directness equal to her own. "Did you send some money to my aunt in Philadelphia — aunt Angela — to help pay off the loan I got from her?" he asked. With his "true little friend" standing facing the light that poured in through the open window, Teddy saw all the telltale signs — saw the color leave her face entirely, and then come flooding back in an overwhelming rosy rush, saw the droop of the saucy-grave little mouth, the sudden fluttering fall of the lids to hide the consternation in her soft, frank eyes. He noted each sign of guilt, and his heart grew very tender toward the culprit; but his voice gave no evidence of any feeling as he asked presently, quietly and seriously, "Well?"

Little John looked up entreatingly at him. "*Ah* — Teddy!" she said coaxingly, taking a step nearer, and with a little persuasive movement of her hands.

Ted considered that his answer. Drawing a long leather wallet from his coat pocket, he took out of it a wad of bills folded lengthwise, and held it out to Juanita. "You sent on one hundred and twenty dollars," he remarked with a very businesslike voice and manner, "and here they all are — the identical bills. Aunt Angela returned them to me, at my request, with your note." He held up to view the few lines over which

Audrey and Juanita had worked so hard, and which they had considered so effective. "The money I return," — he laid the wad on the table, as Juanie made no sign of taking it, — "with most sincere, heartfelt thanks — I cannot accept it. The note I shall always keep," — he put it carefully away in his wallet; "the kindness I will *never* forget! I thank you for it with all my heart — I thank you for it, Little John!" His tone grew very earnest.

Juanita gave the bills a flirt with her hand that sent them fluttering over the table. "Ah, *bah!*" she exclaimed angrily, her chin well in the air. "You 're *not* my friend — you don't consider me *your* friend, or you 'd never be so horribly, contemptibly proud and stuck up — and refuse to accept such a little thing! You 're not my friend at all. Now! And I 'm not going to consider you as such any longer. Just remember that! If you can be proud, I can be proud, too! And all this money is *not* mine, either. Sixty dollars is mine, and that 's all I 'll take." She hastily caught up bills to that amount, and was about to tear them fiercely into atoms, when the thought of Hattie Eveling crossed her mind — how long and how hard would *she* have to work to earn what had nearly been so easily destroyed! She folded the money and slipped it into her belt.

"Whose is the other half of the amount?" asked Teddy anxiously.

"Find out!" brusquely answered Juanita. "Now, Mr. Latimer," with a proud toss of her head, and drawing her slender, girlish figure to its

full height, "I suppose I am at liberty to go. You need n't say *one* word" — as Ted began an eager defense — "I won't listen! I 'm just *glad* I 'm going to Europe — where I shan't trouble you any longer!" With great dignity she marched across the room, opened the door, then, with her hand on the knob, paused a second to cast a quick glance backward. Ted was standing, leaning against the table, and gazing after her. He looked tired, dejected, and careworn. It occurred to Little John, for the first time, how much older he had grown in appearance since that evening in the autumn when, after the party, he had made his apology and asked her to forgive him. He was a "nice boy" then — now he was a man! Would she have thought of offering money to the bronzed, sturdy men in Anaconda who were her father's friends — or to the men who worked on his ranch or in the mine — to pay their debts? What would they have thought of her! Her anger died away; she suddenly felt as if she had been very daring with Teddy, very "forward," as Katy would have expressed it. Instead of its being her feelings that were hurt, Ted was the one to feel insulted — annoyed!

There were no half measures with Little John. Hastily she went back a step or two, looking shyly and yet frankly up at her friend. "Teddy," she said meekly, holding out her hands in a deprecating fashion that was new in Ted's experience of her, "I 'm *aw*fully sorry if I 've insulted you by offering you that money! I never thought of

your feelings about it until this very minute — I only kept thinking how much I wanted to help you. Though Audrey does n't like me to say it, I am horridly selfish! But 't was n't daddy's money, Ted — 't was my very own, that I worked for, every penny! And I did enjoy it so — saving it up for you!" She saw the bewilderment in his face, and hurriedly described the designing she had done for Miss Findler; but she was careful to keep Audrey's secret. "Now you know all about it," she finished; "and you understand how I came to — send that money to your aunt, don't you? Don't ask me who sent the rest of it, Ted, for I *can't* tell you. And you're not angry now, with me — or hurt — are you? I would n't want to go away off to Europe — I said I would be glad, but I would n't — with an — ill feeling — between us. Suppose anything should happen — a shipwreck, you know — and we *never* saw one another again!"

The tragic voice, the wistful, pleading eyes, the winsome little face, must have appealed strongly to Ted at any time; to-day, in this new humility, this gentle mood, he thought her the sweetest, noblest girl in all the world. It was almost more than he could do just then to remember his promise to Sharley, and his own sense of honor. Oh, to be free from debt, and in a position where he could speak out the eager words that were trembling on his lips! But the debt was very real, and heavy — the promise had been made and must be kept. Little John was under his mother's

care — the only child of rich John Kyle. No! the words must not be spoken. She would go away — some other man would win her — but those words must *not* be spoken. Ted set his teeth hard, and braced all his courage.

He took the hands Little John held out to him, holding one in each of his own. "Am I 'angry,' 'insulted,' did you say?" he asked incredulously, unsteadily. "No, Little John — no — my true little — friend — I could never be either of those with you. I could *never* — in my heart — be angry with you. God bless you for your kind intentions toward — your friend — for your faith in me — your sympathy"— He had reached the limit of his strength. For a brief instant the blue-gray eyes and the soft, velvety, black ones met — one swift, earnest glance — then Ted straightened up and let Juanita's hands drop — without another word. And without a word Little John turned and ran away; not down to the drawing-room, as had been her early intention, but to her own room, where, with her arms around Agagio's neck, she had a little cry — why, she could hardly have explained, for though her cherished plan of helping her friend was defeated, she was yet not unhappy.

"I must do something *very* good with this," she told herself that night, as she took from her belt the bills which aunt Angela had returned. "Teddy won't have 'em, but I 'm not sorry I earned the money — it 's made me understand how poorer girls work — 'neighbors,'" she smiled into

the dressing-glass before which she stood. "Oh" — with a sudden thought — "*I* know what I 'll do with this money!" And the evening of the day that Juanita sailed, Hattie Eveling received sixty dollars by mail, in an envelope. On a piece of paper which was pinned to a bill, the donor had written, "For a little summer outing, from a sincere friend." And the young designer never learned from whence the gift came.

The last days went very swiftly, what with going about with Mr. Kyle, shopping for necessaries for the voyage, packing, seeing the friends who called to say "good-by," and attending to the hundred and one things which claim attention when one is leaving home for a long stay. The two who were going away were guests of honor in these last days. No allusion was made to it, but they were treated with the greatest consideration and tenderness; their wishes were consulted, their opinions received with unusual respect; and there was always a place allowed to one or the other, or to both at once, beside the little mother. Kittredge actually grew "chummy" with Juanita, and Rach was Audrey's shadow; Dorrie trotted up and down the attic steps until her little legs were tired, under the fond delusion that she was "helping Aud!" To Jamie, with many injunctions, was intrusted the care of Agagio, who was to be left with the Latimers until his young mistress's return. There had been talk of sending the dog back to the ranch, but Little John had begged that he might remain in New York and be under

Jamie's care. "Jamie likes dogs, he is kind and gentle with them," she said, "and Gag loves him. And while the old doggie 's here you people can't — any of you — quite forget me!" Then she dashed out of the room before Sharley could reply.

So Jamie at once assumed the care of Agagio, and felt great pride in his charge. "We 'll have lots of fun, won't we, Gag?" he informed the terrier, and with a most benevolent expression of countenance, unwitting of the cruel loss before him, Gagio thumped his tail in sign of agreement, and caressed the little boy liberally with his tongue.

By the afternoon of the twenty-sixth all preparations were completed; except for the steamer trunks, the luggage had all gone on board; there was nothing more to do or think of, and the shadow of the morrow's parting was being felt. But the evening was saved from sadness by a happening which was quite unexpected to all save Mr. Kyle.

While Juanita stood by the drawing-room window watching for her father, who was to dine with the Latimers that last afternoon, Ted came rapidly along the sidewalk. Little John's face had been very dismal, her black eyes full of melancholy, the corners of her mouth drooping; but when Teddy, in passing, took off his straw hat to her with a flourish and a beaming countenance, she immediately felt very much more cheerful. "He 's got some good news!" she declared with sudden conviction, and ran to the drawing-room door to meet him.

Ted came in with a jaunty air, his eyes bright,

and smiling as Juanita had not seen him smile for months. "Oh, Teddy, you 've got good news!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, I have — you 're a little witch to guess it!" he cried gayly. "And you 're just the one I wanted to tell it to first. There has come a turning to the long lane, Little John — pretty soon I 'll be out of it altogether! Oh, joy!" He threw his arms out, and laughed, Ted's own merry, hearty laugh! "Now, I 'll tell you. What d' you think has come to pass? I *am* the luckiest dog — without exception! Things just tumble into my mouth! Well, your father came to the office this afternoon to see me — he 'll be round presently — he stopped a minute at the hotel — we walked uptown together — and what do you think? (I believe I said that before, but you must excuse all incoherences this evening.) He has offered, and I have most thankfully accepted, the position of agent in New York for the Anaconda Silver Mines! What d' you say to that, my lady? At more than double the salary I now get — and with prospects — *prospects*, mum, ahead! Sounds like a fairy tale — does n't it? But it 's true — thank God! Now I can do all for the family that I ever did, and much more, too, and besides that pay off aunt Angela in about two years. Two years!" He threw up his head with a glad, free movement, as if already feeling the burden of his debts falling away. "What wonderful, happy things are to happen at the end of two years! You are to be home again — and Audrey — and I am to be out of debt — a free

man, and in a tip-top position! Now — is n't my news worth the telling?" His eyes were dancing with fun; he was brimming over with happiness.

"Oh, how splendid — *splendid!*" Little John's face matched her words. "Oh, Teddy! I 'm so glad — so happy for you! I congratulate you! Oh, I can't express to you how glad I am!" she told him in her eager, warm-hearted fashion.

Ted looked keenly at her. "I have a fancy — perhaps — I owe my good luck to you — that you 've said something to your father about" —

"No, no!" cried Juanita hastily. "No, I did n't, Teddy. Daddy knows I — like all the Latimers," — the color deepened in her cheeks, but her eyes still met his gaze frankly, — "and oh! *nothing* could 've made me so happy as this! but I never asked him to help you. He has done it of his own accord — truly — and because he 's sure you 'll do the work well. Dad 'll do lots of kindnesses for people — but he *will not* employ a man that he thinks is n't A1 — up to the position. That 's all the more compliment to you! He did say this morning, just as he was leaving me, that he had his eye on 'that young Latimer' — you. This is what he must have meant. Oh, Teddy, I 'm glad — glad!"

"I know you are," said Copperfield earnestly, "and that makes this good luck all the sweet— all the more welcome to me! I could never forget these last months — they 've been terrible! They 've done me good, though," he admitted honestly. "I 'm twice the man I was." He straightened

up and threw back his head. "You see things had come so easy to me that I was getting pretty well 'sot up' in my own opinion — in other less elegant words — I was getting bumptious; I thought I owned the earth. I 'm mighty thankful to be allowed another chance! Now, let 's go tell mums and the others."

The morning of the twenty-seventh dawned clear and bright, and the Lucania sailed at eleven o'clock. Long before that hour the five travelers were on board, and the whole Latimer family as well, "to see them off." Other friends were there too, — Roger Burton and the Andersons, and some that came especially for Mr. Kyle, "Dinnis" McGuffin among them. Mrs. Mac and Lonzo were disporting themselves at a fashionable summer resort. Everybody affected to be in the best of spirits; jokes were made, and conversation was kept up briskly until the last moments came and the "outsiders" took their leave, allowing the family to be alone together. Those were very trying last moments.

"I 'm feelin' meself a baste an' a brute to be draggin' them gyrls away off to Europe!" declared Mr. Kyle, blowing his nose vigorously and turning his back on his daughter, that he might not see her tears. Kittredge disappeared, and was found sulky and dejected on the dock when all was over; and the younger children wept aloud, with some assistance from Katy, whose complacency had forsaken her in parting from Sharley, for whom she felt all a successful nurse's affection

and pride. Ted hung on the outskirts of the group, white and silent. In the home Agagio, shut up in his young mistress's empty apartment, scented a desertion, and rent the air with his howls.

"Oh, mums! Oh, Sharley! I have n't been *half* good enough to you! Oh, what shall I do without you both!" cried Audrey, in tears, clinging to her two dear ones. "Oh, Sharl! I 'm leaving everything for you to do! Oh, I am selfish to go!"

"Don't worry about me, Aud," Sharley whispered, holding her young sister in a last embrace. "Ted will be so much better off now, and *he* will look out for me. Let me tell you his last plan — to hire a cottage in the country somewhere, and take us all there for the summer. Won't that be fine? Good-by, dear little sister. Write home often — to mums — write her by every opportunity you can — and most lovingly. I can wait for *my* letters" —

Juanita's arms went close about the little mother.

"I 'm coming back to you," she declared. "Two years and I 'll be home again — and I 'll be a better girl — you 'll see. I want to live with you all my life." Then her strong young arms tightened, and her curly head went down on Mrs. Latimer's shoulder. "Oh," she whispered, "you 're the only mother I 've ever known! Oh, you love me, don't you?"

"Love you! indeed I do, my *dear* child!" cried the little mother tremulously, patting the girl's face with her tender, fluttering fingers. "I love you, dear — and you will hardly have sailed when

we shall begin to look forward to seeing you home again. Take care of Audrey — and let her take care of you. Don't forget your prayers, my darling — remember that I — all of us — will be praying for — our two dear girls. God's blessing — be with — you!" Her breath was coming short, and Sharley's warning hand fell on Juanita's shoulder.

"Think of all the letters you will have to write, mums," she said brightly, though her voice was quivering. "You 'll have to write turn about, or *some*body or other's feelings will get hurt. Good-by, Juanita — good-by, dear!"

Then, to the relief of more than one, came the warning shout of "All ashore!" and there was a scurry for the dock, Teddy almost carrying his mother across the gangway. There had been only time on his part for a hurried kiss to Audrey, a handshake to Juanita; he was afraid to trust himself to speak.

The two girls crowded against the rail, gazing down at the group on shore. "Good-by! be good to Gagio! write to us often — often — begin as soon as you get home! Tell us about *every*thing!" called Little John; Audrey was busy wiping away the tears that were pouring down her face.

Ted looked up — saw the mournful, wistful expression in the soft black eyes that were trying so hard to keep the tears back, and sprang past the sailors, who had begun to raise the gangway. Up the companionway he sped, and Juanita flew to meet him.

"Oh, Teddy! two years is such a long — *long*

— while — to be away!" she sobbed, throwing out her hands to him.

Ted caught her hands to his breast. "Only two years! *Only* two!" he cried cheerily, though his voice was husky, and his heart lay heavy as a stone with the parting. "Wait bravely — for two years — Little John!" Then he dashed across the deck, and leaped to the shore.

And standing at the end of the long pier, with his arm around the little mother, supporting her, Ted, with the rest of the family, stood in silence and watched the big ocean steamer until it was out of sight.

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